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Welcome

Discover the
incredible art
of Genzoman
on page 8

WELCOME TO FANTASY ARTIST

*W*elcome to **Fantasy Artist**, an exciting new title dedicated to fantasy and sci-fi. In this issue you'll find a wealth of great art and tutorials to help you create incredible fantasy and sci-fi images. We kick off with an interview with Genzoman (p8) and then dive into our revamped Community section, which is packed with news, views and your artwork.

Our feature on p30 looks at the basics of creature design and explains the key principles you need to understand in order to create realistic critters. And then it's tutorial time!

In this issue you'll learn a vast range of skills and techniques, from how to paint the gorgeous pin-up warrior girl on our cover to magical manga effects, action scenes and more. Our sci-fi content blasts off with tutorials on designing mechs, building space scenes and using colour-wheel tricks to achieve a suitable tonal palette to make your art pop.

Our new Fantasy Art Skills section is packed with quick fixes and guides that will help you achieve

great results across a wide range of fantasy and sci-fi art styles. So join us on our quest to help you achieve your best fantasy art.



April

Get in touch with the team



DA_April



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fantasyartist@imagine-publishing.co.uk

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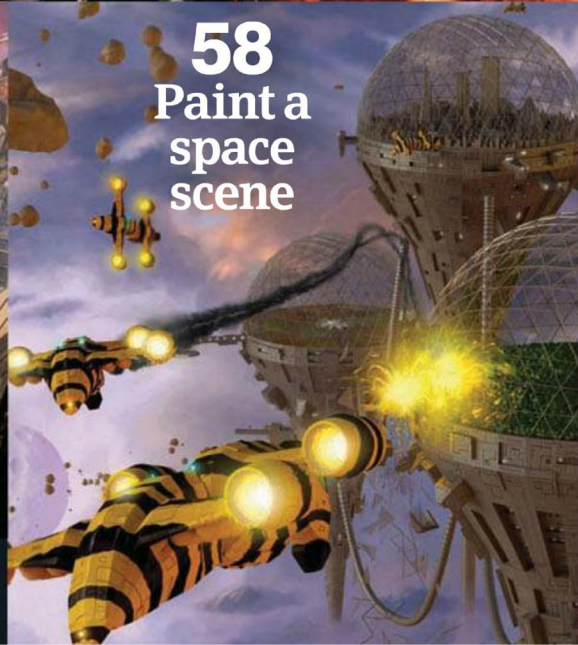
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Paint a pin-up warrior

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Contributors

Chester Ocampo

chesterocampo.net



Join Chester to discover how he created our beautiful cover image this issue. His in-depth Photoshop tutorial starts on p36.

Schin Loong

www.schin-art.com



Create magical manga effects with Schin this issue as she shares her drawing and painting tips for creating a sorceress on p42.

Ben Prenevost

prenevoststudios.com



Leap into the fray with Ben's action-packed tutorial on p48, where he demonstrates how to create a vibrant comics-inspired combat scene.

Israel A Carrion

isrartistic.com



Design mechs with a difference thanks to Israel's advice. He combines the classic giant-robot design with Wild West imagery on p54.

John Malcolm

johnmalcolm1970.co.uk



Learn how to build up a space scene in free 3D program Blender and then use Painter to transform it in John's tutorial starting over on p58.

Joe Cummings

cummingsillustration.com



Joe introduces gamut masking, a colour-wheel trick that will help you pick out the perfect palette. Find out how it's done on p62.

The artists

Meet this issue's collection of experts

Amber Hill

vantid.deviantart.com



Overload on rainbows, sparkles, moonbeams and more as Amber explains how to build up a classic unicorn image on p68.

Eric Proctor

tsaoshin.com



Discover how references can help you to paint realistic dragon wings on p74, whether your inspiration comes from East or West.

Edward 'Joel' Wittlif

tinyurl.com/paperbagninja



Learn how an in-depth understanding of the anatomy of hands can help you to paint fantastic fantasy characters on p76.

Lili Ibrahim

www.liliibrahim.com



Explore key compositional techniques for planning and painting a piece of fantasy landscape concept art on p78.

Gareth Barnes

www.garethbarnes.com



Create super-cute fairytale line art that's ideal for use as the basis of an illustration or as a fun colouring-book page for young art fans on p80.

Anastasia Korochanskaya

balaa.deviantart.com



Anastasia explains how sunset and the unique effects it creates can enhance your fantasy paintings to add magic and mystery on p82.

Sandra Chang-Adair

www.sandrachang.net



Live up your comic art with Sandra's key tips for panel rhythm, character poses, panel breaking and much more. Kapow! Find it on p84.

Abi Daker

www.abigaildaker.com



Games and books frequently feature maps of fantasy lands to orient the reader or player. Find out how to create them on p86.

Giuseppe Di Girolamo

www.peppeti.blogspot.it



Get essential figure drawing tips to help you improve your combat-based images. Discover force lines and how to use them on p90.

Fantasy Artist

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“ Art is a way of communicating. I learned that it is a way of expression... to say what you want to say ”

Meet Genzoman

We talk to the Chilean illustrator who went from fantasy fan to influential concept artist for his favourite franchises

**GONZALO
ORDÓÑEZ
ARIAS**

Artist info



Find out more about the man and see a massive range of artworks including in-progress sketches and tutorials on his deviantART site: genzoman.deviantart.com.



ART CREDITS

- Blizzard (*World of Warcraft*),
- UDON Entertainment
- Warner Brothers
- Legendary Pictures
- *Universal Fighting System*
- *Double Dragon: Neon* (WayForward)
- *The Spoils*
- *Legend of the Five Rings*

● **Stheno, 2011 Photoshop** This image is of Stheno, the eldest of the Gorgons in Greek mythology (Medusa, the one we all know, is her little sister)



Not long after the turn of the century, something very exciting happened to the internet: it discovered Genzoman. The Chilean illustrator, known to his mum as Gonzalo Ordóñez Arias, was not long out of university and working as an art teacher when he started making his first forays into illustration. Beginning with fan art inspired by videogames, cartoons and comics, he rapidly garnered a cult following of fans, some who loved what he did with their favourite characters, others who simply loved his style.

That art style stands out a mile. Love it or hate it, the energetic, exaggerated poses and foreshortening, influenced equally by Western and Eastern fantasy art styles simply screams "Genzo!" Plenty of illustrators have tried to capture the same hyper-extended sense of energy in their work, but what makes Genzo's art distinct is the genuine love he has for his subject. A huge fan of myths, whenever he posts a new mythical drawing on the deviantART account that has been his main public profile for the last eight years, he includes a detailed description of the ancient narrative that he has just updated.

With such a strong foundation in art and such a deep love of the mythical characters he portrays, it's no wonder that clients who wanted characters given the epic treatment soon started knocking on Genzo's door. The anime-loving boy from the small Chilean town of Arica has grown up and fulfilled quite a few dreams – he's now illustrating for the very comics, videogames and anime that he once drew fan art for. We caught up with Genzoman to find out more about the secrets of his success.

“ Since I could draw, I [polished] my technique... instead of just having fun ”

Tell us about yourself and your background. Where are you from?

I'm an average guy that grew up watching a lot of anime, reading comics and playing videogames. That kind of entertainment influenced me in the way I work. I was born in a small town called Arica in the northern part of Chile, I'm married, I have two sons and I love what I do for a living!

What were your first artistic influences and why did they inspire you?

I think that one of the things that influenced me the most was watching cartoons and anime on the foreign TV channels that used to be available in my town, such as *Transformers*, *Robotech*, *Voltron*, *Arbegas*... that kind of stuff was popular at the beginning of the Eighties when I first got familiar with anime. I also used to read comics – my parents bought me a lot of Disney comics.

How would you describe your style and your favourite kind of artwork?

It's hard to explain with a single word, because I'm not too conscious about it, I always see it like something that's moving so it's hard to try to describe. I'm a big fan of *Moving Fortress* illustrator Quique Alcatena, and of course Frank Frazetta.

When did you first start creating artwork?

I would say when I was around 15 or 16 years old I started to take artwork and what I was drawing seriously. I mean I tried to compromise a bit more with the subjects I was drawing and stop treating it just as a hobby – I used to spend the time doodling the things I wanted to while my teachers talked in the classroom. It was then that I decided that since I could draw, I'd try to polish my technique more instead of just having fun with it.

And when did you first start work in the art industry as an illustrator?

At the end of 1998 I started to have some work commissioned for an indie editorial magazine, and I created a website, so people started to contact me through it [for work].

You started out drawing cartoon heroes, but what or who are your primary influences right now?

Since I started to play *World of Warcraft*, I've been a huge fan of Glenn Rane's work (www.glennrane.com). This is not just for his technique and what his



“ It’s hard to explain [my style]... it’s something that’s moving ”



● **Dragon Rider (above), 2008 Photoshop** This was originally done as part of an art book project, and was mainly inspired by the song *There Was a Time* by Guns N’ Roses

● **Cu Chulainn (left), 2011 Photoshop** The legendary Irish hero known for his battle frenzy. He’s often compared to the Greek Achilles; they have similar stories

● **Chaos, 2011 Photoshop** One of the primitive Greek gods. Chaos is the mother of Night and Darkness, and the grandmother of the Fates. She’s described by Ovid in *Metamorphoses*





● **Loki (above), 2011**
Photoshop A re-edit of an old image, done for my art book. This is not based on the Marvel Comics Loki, but the original Norse god of mischief

● **Thor (right), 2010**
Photoshop Again, this image is not of the Marvel Comics Thor, it's the original god of thunder

● **Bakemono (left), 2011**
Photoshop A bakemono is a shapeshifter in Japanese myth. Most often they can be tanuki (raccoon-dogs), kitsune (foxes) or bakeneko (cats)



● **Sphinx, 2011 Photoshop** Famous from Greek and Egyptian myth, the sphinx will ask you a riddle and if you can't answer, she will eat you!

images transmit about the game and its world, these images are icons by themselves. And Wen-M (wen-m.deviantart.com); his detailed design and characters make his a particularly original style.

So it's videogames art that inspires you today?

Videogames, general interactive experiences inspire me as well as the whole experience of videogames concept art, because I think it has no restrictions on the creative area like art for movies does.

Tell us about some of the games you've done work for. As a fan, what was it like to work on Blizzard's World of Warcraft franchise?

It's a complete honour and like a dream come true! I also feel that I grew a lot as an artist working for them. When I saw one of my images on the *WoW* loading screen it was a really wonderful time, not only as an illustrator, but as a fan of the saga.

You've done work on the SoulCalibur and Street Fighter franchises too, is that correct? What did you do?

I've worked on *SoulCalibur* for its *Universal Fighting System* card game, which is based on the videogame *SoulCalibur IV*. I did several images of the lead characters from the game such as Hilde and Yoshimitsu. For *Street Fighter* I've worked with UDON's people on several products as illustrations for comics, produced work for art books published by UDON Entertainment (specialising in videogame art) and some work in the booklet that goes with the upcoming game *Street Fighter X Tekken*.

So what are your favourite digital and traditional mediums or software to work in and why?

I've been working lately on repeating a process of traditional painting called *grisaille*. I work in black and white in Photoshop, building volumes first and then the tones using a Wacom Bamboo tablet. Then you colour it. It's an important technique and I think it's really worthwhile for digital artists.

So you work with quite a traditional process – sketch, then build volumes and values, then colour. You're showing your training as an art teacher there...

It's actually something that comes from trial and error, in fact it has more to do with achieving a better result in the smallest amount of time possible! I used to think that in that sense illustration has more in common with sports; [the aim is to eliminate] the things that you do that are not entirely necessary to get a good performance.

What was it that made you look at digital art in the first place?

The first time I gave any weight to digital art was when I read *Akira*, the Western version coloured by Steve Oliff. After that I kind of stuck with the thought that all digital art looked like Epic Comics's *Akira* – it was massive at the time. So I was surprised when I was looking at the manga website tinami.com in 1995 or 1996 – many Japanese illustrators were into more organic images that they created with Painter.

So are there digital techniques or programs you'd like to learn more about?

The truth is that I'd like to learn more about 3D. I've tried to gain more veracity; I'd like to explore more in that area. I'm already handling ZBrush, but I'd like to learn more 3D in general.

Do you have a set workflow? What is it?

My method is to sit and work from the beginning to the end in one image, even if it means that I'm working for six hours. I don't like to split my workflow because I think that doing that stops it. I recommend just working through the process in order, from sketch to details.

Do you tend to combine traditional and digital media in your work?

I haven't used traditional media for about six years, for different reasons; cost, portability, the ability to edit my work and the time it takes. While I like traditional media, with the rush of editorial deadlines the digital method becomes more productive, at least for me. Also I like the idea of having my laptop in my backpack as a portable studio. I love the idea that I can go out to any place – it can be a bank, an airport, wherever – and paint.

“ I like the idea of having my laptop as a portable studio... I can go out to any place – it can be a bank, an airport, wherever – and paint ”



What was it that made you take the leap from teaching to freelance illustration? Was it a particular commission?

I was working as an illustrator during my last years at university, so when I worked as a teacher I had those two very different jobs going on. I left teaching, though, because my first son had just been born and the school I worked at was too far away from home – I decided to stay to have more time with my children (I have two). And [leaving the teaching post] also made me set out to demonstrate my commitment to being an illustrator and a freelancer.

As someone who has taught art, what do you think is the most important lesson for art students?

I honestly think that the most important thing of all is to transmit affection for what you do. Give them a realistic vision about what art is and what it's for. In my humble opinion, that's to communicate. For me art is a way of communicating. I learned that it is a way of expression and to say – in a different manner – what you want to say. I think that's the most important thing.

Your work features a lot of myths as well as pop culture characters and themes. Why do you think myth is still so important in fantasy art?

I think that culture is alive when myths are renewed. For example, I grew up watching old movies based in Greek and Roman times or on classical stories, like the original *Clash of the Titans* (from 1981). Those icons – the classical gods and heroes – are renewed for each generation because every time they're reimagined they offer us new visions and also renewed ways to consume them. Look at the new *Wrath of the Titans*. I think that it is always good to have actualisations of important cultural symbols and ideas for every generation.

Aside from the mythological subjects, we've heard that you're working on a Western-style comic called *The Wanderer* inspired by Sergio Leone. How will this mesh with your fantasy style?

The Wanderer captures an aspect of fantasy that explores the paranormal side of the mythology that has been present in all eras, [so] it becomes a bridge between my fantasy work and the Wild West stories. I really love North American mythologies, not only the ones related to folktales and traditions, but also the myths around the key ages and epochs in American history – like the frontier – and the historical figures.

Sounds like a fascinating project. So, finally, what are your plans for the future?

To survive, ha ha! Seriously, though, I intend to keep doing what I like, to grow more as an artist and to keep moving.



● **Skeggiold, 2011 Photoshop** Done for Ballistic Publishing's d'Artiste: *Character Design*. Skeggiold is one of the less-known valkyries – a psychopomp in Norse myth. Her name means big axe



“ I think culture is alive when myths are renewed... every time they're reimagined they offer us new visions and also renewed ways to consume them ”

Community

Get in touch with the Fantasy Artist team  DA_April  DigitalArtistUK
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Art of the Fantastic

Fantasy art fans are set to flock to Allentown Art Museum for the genre's largest-ever exhibition

At the Edge: Art of the Fantastic is set to become the world's largest exhibition dedicated to fantasy art. Held in the prestigious surroundings of the Lehigh Valley's Allentown Art Museum, the showcase is being heralded as the most comprehensive exhibition of its kind with over 150 artworks created over the past 200 years from more than 130 artists. It will include William Blake's illustrations for the 1797 book *Night Thoughts* to Julie Bell's *A Dream About a Dragon and a Tree*, which was completed especially for the show.

"Historical artists include Gustave Doré, Edmund Blair Leighton and Howard Pyle", explains Chris Potash, the museum's manager of marketing and public relations. "There are [works]

from the Golden Age of illustration including [work for] *Treasure Island*, *The Swiss Family Robinson*, Shakespeare's *The Tempest* and *Hamlet*. Plus there are images from science-fiction pulps and movies such as HG Wells's *The War of the Worlds...* *Dune*, *Star Wars* and *Avatar*, and iconic works from such fantasy art masters like Giger, Frazetta, Boris Vallejo, Olivia, James Gurney and so many more."

Revealing what visitors can hope to experience at the show, he adds: "While many of these images have achieved a level of recognition from their popular uses... the original works themselves are rarely exhibited, and never before... in a museum setting. Seeing the pieces [with other work] in a historical context provides another

level of appreciation that contemporary imaginative realists are part of a long and celebrated tradition indeed."

The Allentown museum's director Brooks Joyner has been keen to assert what makes this exhibition different from previous shows. "Museums have traditionally incorporated modern and contemporary fantasy art into their collections as influential pictorial elements that are not standalone works of art but derivative or niche pictures designated as narrative and illustrative." The event, which runs until 9 September 2012, is expected to draw in excess of 20,000 visitors and Brooks reveals that the exhibition's current success has inspired a follow up: "We have already scheduled the Association of Fantastic Artists annual four-day convention to be here at the Allentown Art Museum in September of 2013. We also intend to have other exhibitions in the future featuring both contemporary fantasy artists as well as figures of historical importance."

● Learn more at allentownartmuseum.org



● A Dream About a Dragon and a Tree, a 2012 piece by Julie Bell

● Roger Dean created this piece in 2010 called Fly from Here



© Julie Bell

© Roger Dean

● Created by Lars Grant-West in 2010, this piece is entitled Pact of the Blind

© Lars Grant-West



● Paul Lehr, who sadly passed away in 1998, created the image Cosmic Assembly in 1990

© Lehr family

FANTASY EXHIBITIONS



The Art of Video Games
Smithsonian American Art Museum
16 March to 30 September 2012
americanart.si.edu

● The Art of Video Games is one of the first exhibitions to explore the forty-year evolution of videogames as an artistic medium. The show is set to focus on striking visual effects and the creative use of new technologies.



IlluXCon 2012
Altoona, Pennsylvania
8-11 November 2012
www.illuxcon.com

● IlluXCon is said to feature the largest gathering of fantastic art and artists in the world, and the 2012 outing is set for nearly 60 artists in the main exhibition, with many more featured in the IlluXCon Showcase.



Comic-Con
San Diego Convention Center, 12-15 July
www.comic-con.org

● The most notorious exhibition for all things sci-fi and fantasy related, Comic-Con traditionally showcases comic books, sci-fi and fantasy movies and television programmes, but today also incorporates a wealth of related artwork.



Each issue, Fiona Hooley from deviantART will bring us news, trends and updates



She Calls the Crows by enmi (enmi.deviantart.com) is a beautiful digital painting that the artist claims took so long it hurt her hand, but we agree it was well worth the effort for the fabulous result!



The Night Chicago Died by stroggtank (stroggtank.deviantart.com) is a wonderful 3D character design that was created as part of an exhibition themed around old songs. We love all the attention to detail.

Fiona Hooley, director of community operations
deviantART.com | fiona@deviantart.com

Artist Spotlight Robyn Drayson

An artist who focuses on anthropomorphic designs, Robyn's work caught our eye so we decided to find out more about it

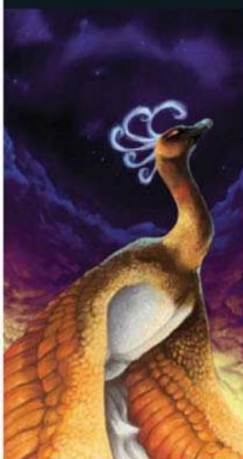


Robyn Drayson has just discovered the joys of anthro art. "I've been creating anthro artwork for about three months now. I find it an interesting subject matter in that it combines some of the best aspects of animal, fantasy and human art. The patterns, shapes, colours, textures and freedom of animal

and fantasy art can be merged with the expressiveness, multitude of poses and actions that human art allows", she explains. The 22-year-old Canadian has always been fascinated by animal-based art and creature design. She has a science degree, but took up drawing seriously six years ago and is keen to succeed. "I'd love to get into the art industry as a professional illustrator or concept artist. I strive to use my art to bring life to characters and concepts in a way that gives others pleasure and amazement, and I want to improve my skills and learn new ways to do so."

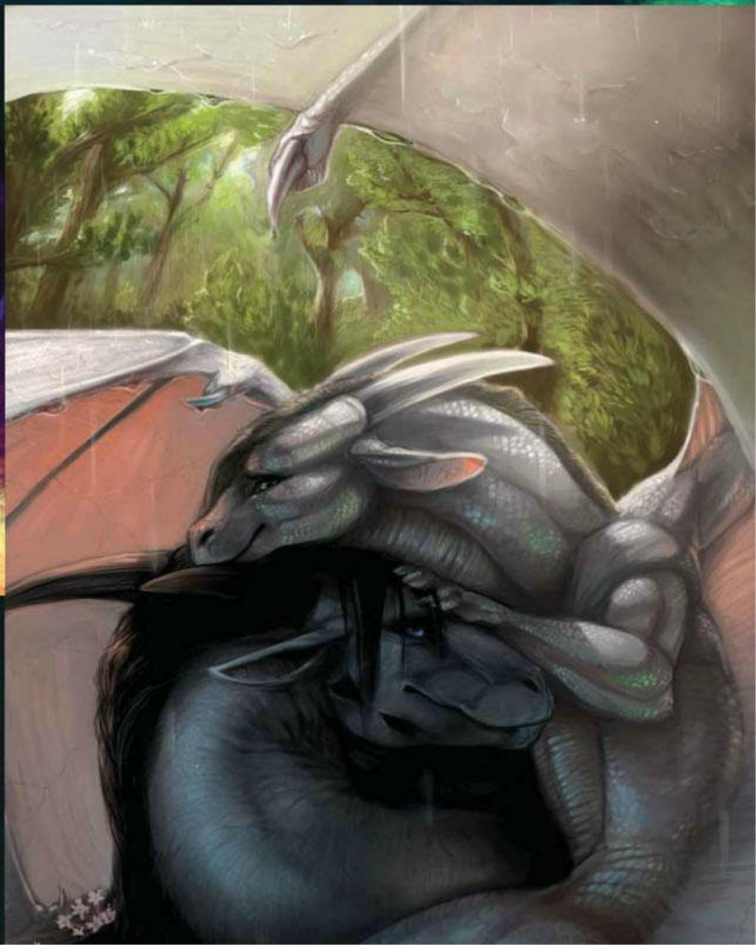
● Discover more of Robyn's work at rajewel.deviantart.com

● This recent anthro piece (above) showcases Robyn's newfound love for this particular genre of creature art



● This phoenix rising was created with PaintTool SAI. Robyn is fascinated by the science of lighting effects and how they work to create tone in paintings

● Two dragons curl up and hide from a sudden shower in another piece created in SAI



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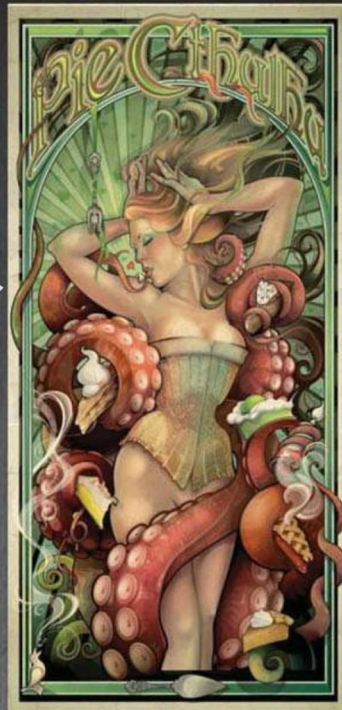
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Pie Cthulhu, 2009
"This personal work is a fun editorial piece on dieting that originally came from a dream."



Cupcake Cthulhu, 2011
"Cupcake Cthulhu is the sister piece to the popular Pie Cthulhu. Cookie Cthulhu will be created next."

Icarus, 2010
"This is the instant just before Icarus realises that things are about to go horribly wrong."



Artist retrospective

Artist info



ECHO CHERNIK www.echo-x.com

I've been a working illustrator for the past eighteen years. During that time, my work has won many awards for my modern interpretation of the Art Nouveau and retro pin-up styles. The majority of my projects over the last decade are in the advertising field, but I also get the opportunity to work in publishing on various book covers. My clients range from Fortune 500 companies to local and regional brands. I also exhibit in gallery shows.

Cupcake Cthulhu
2011, **Photoshop,**
Illustrator

● Cupcake Cthulhu is the sister piece to the popular Pie Cthulhu. Cookie Cthulhu will be created next and is designed to sit between the two. I recently finished a Neapolitan Ice Cream Cthulhu triptych as well. These are personal pieces which come from my inner artistic self and measure 18 x 48 inches.

Pie Cthulhu
2009, **Photoshop,**
Illustrator

● 'The Call of Cthulhu' is a horror story written by HP Lovecraft and first published in *Weird Tales* in 1928. This personal work is a fun editorial piece on dieting that originally came in a dream and shows the horror of a beautiful corseted woman tormented by a demonic creature with the allure of pie.



Icarus

2010, **Photoshop, Illustrator**

● This is the instant just before Icarus realises that things are about to go horribly wrong. He is in a moment of stasis and thought. The piece was designed to be compositionally balanced when held upside down so that when viewed upright it is slightly off balance, with a feeling of vertigo.

Cerulean

2011, **Photoshop**

● This is part of a series of gun girls painted in Photoshop (her sister pieces can be found on my website). This particular one is for the RPG *Shadowrun*, which I have been playing for years. These are in a much quicker style than my standard set Nouveau pieces, which is a wonderful break for me. I love her mohawk.

Mama Bear

2010, **Photoshop, Illustrator**

● This was originally for an article in *Black Gate* magazine. They asked twenty illustrators to depict "a raven-haired shamaness in a gold and white cloak." I decided rather than show just a powerful woman, I would make mine a mother. You can see the baby on her shoulder and a C-section scar.

Coffee

2010, **Photoshop, Illustrator**

● This is one of thirteen illustrations created for the Buford Highway Farmers Market in Atlanta, Georgia. It is a massive ethnic market featuring foods from around the world. Each of the series is influenced by design elements of different cultures around the world and includes tea, bread, pasta and cheese.

Bubo v.2

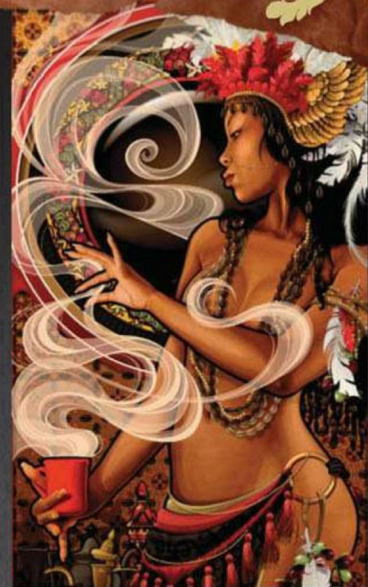
2009, **Photoshop, Illustrator**

● Bubo v.2 is my experiment with creating a steampunk piece. My model for this is costumer Yaya Han, who designed the dress. When I think steampunk, I think red velvet raised wallpaper, mechanical animals and keys. The mechanical owl is inspired by the little owl in the original *Clash of the Titans*.

Community



Mama Bear, 2010
"A raven-haired shamaness."



Coffee, 2010
"Created for the Buford Highway Market."

Cerulean, 2011
"These are in a much quicker style than my standard set Nouveau pieces, which is a wonderful break for me. I love her mohawk."

Bubo v.2, 2009
"When I think steampunk, I think red velvet raised wallpaper, mechanical animals and keys. The mechanical owl is inspired by... *Clash of the Titans*."



Artist Spotlight Nanako Saikari

A 23-year-old illustrator from the US who creates beautiful manga imagery, Nanako started using digital art programs in her teens, saying: "It's been five and a half years since I started with digital art. But I've been an artist from childhood"



Having been drawing and painting for as long as she can remember, Nanako is most comfortable with a pencil in her hand. She does her sketches and underdrawings for digital pieces in pencil, although lately she's been trying to use Photoshop for her entire workflow. "I think my style is influenced a lot by manga and videogames", Nanako says of her crisply drawn artwork. Her use of colour comes straight from anime movies, with more than a hint of Studio Ghibli in her sunlit, saturated scenes. She prefers fantastical characters and creatures to the ordinary world, but doesn't necessarily go for the epic battles and adventurous quests favoured by some other mangaka: "I like to draw scenes of the daily life of the people who live in a fantasy world." Hence her whimsical and sometimes wistful character studies and scenes will feature impossible characters and creatures doing everyday things, like walking in a favourite pair of shoes or playing with a cat. Having produced a programme for the Miami Youth Ballet's 2008 production of *The Nutcracker* and exhibited her acrylic still-life paintings at the Jeffrey Leder Gallery in New York, Nanako definitely has her eye on the industry. Her ambition is to become a book illustrator.

● Discover more of Nanako's work at nnk.artistswanted.org

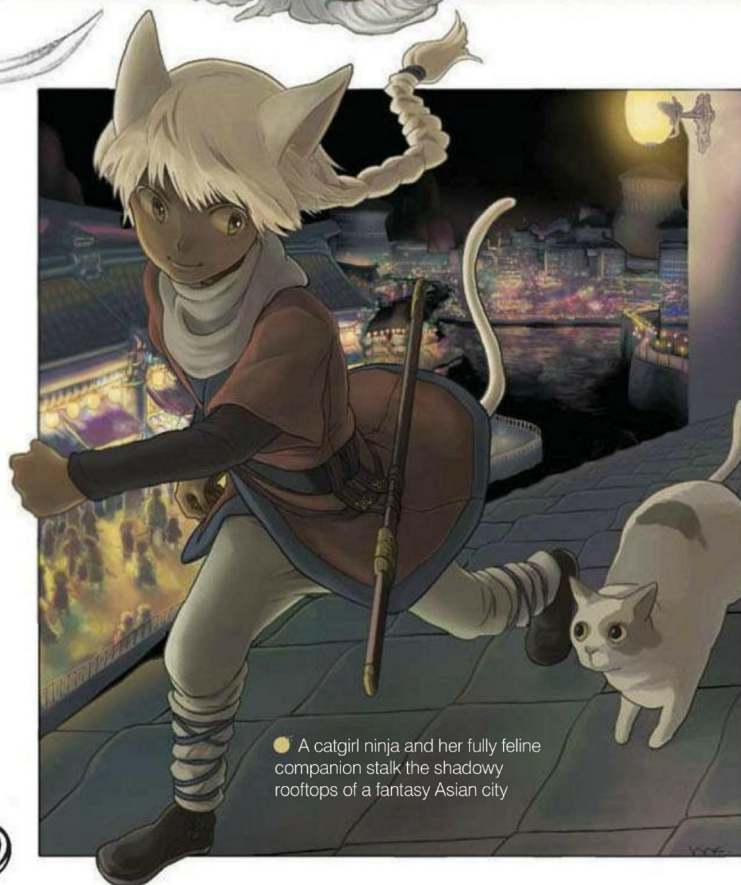


● This manga sailor girl slacking off from her job is an example of Nanako's style; fantasy world, real activities



● An example of refined line art done in pencil, ready for importing into Photoshop to be coloured

“ I like to draw scenes of the daily life of the people who live in a fantasy world ”



● A catgirl ninja and her fully feline companion stalk the shadowy rooftops of a fantasy Asian city



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Community

“ We don't seem to stop generating new artistic projects, so each day we are celebrating our journey with joy! ”

● BM314N(I-I01y by Martin de Diego Sádaba and Liran Szeiman



Hysterical Minds celebrates two major milestones

The collective's third birthday sees it showcase its tenth online exhibition

Founded in 2009, Hysterical Minds is a Spanish-speaking collective of over 100 artists from 15 different countries. Every three to five months the collective sets up a themed online exhibition, and the latest – entitled *Symphony* – is a very special one, as it sees Hysterical Minds celebrate both its third anniversary and its tenth exhibition. With *Symphony*, which takes music as its theme, “we want to bring a visual concert to your house, generated from a common passion that unites us as artists: music”, explains director Martin de Diego Sádaba. “We have given room for expression and creation, reinterpreting our favourite tracks, genres and [musicians] from classical music to industrial tunes, from black metal to dance pop, travelling through a wide spectrum of shades to bring you a diverse but coherent collection.”

The group is given a concept brief by Martin for each exhibition: “The idea is to discover the wide spectrum of interpretations that just one concept can give through multiple and different visions coming from a crowd of artists that work using different kinds of media”, he says. And how does he feel about the group celebrating two major milestones with the release of *Symphony*? “We are very glad that our tenth release has coincided with our third birthday, because that marks a turning point to think about our progress (both as a group and individually) and about the projects we have developed. The collective is living [in] a moment in which all the feedback is positive, we have increased our quality to very high standards and we don't seem to stop generating new artistic projects, so each day we are celebrating our journey with joy!”

● Fallout by Dumark



● Depressed (above) by Joshua Cairos

● Blessed Curse by Martin de Diego Sádaba

● Hierarca (right) by Martin de Diego Sádaba



Readers' Gallery

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Featured artists



RB White

www.digitalartistdaily.com/user/RBWhite

"I've worked for more than 20 years in the animation and illustration industry for companies all over the world. I live in Canada with my wife and two kids."



Jennifer Healy

www.digitalartistdaily.com/user/MyAmbeon

"I've been painting digitally since May 2009. In most of my pieces I like to take beautiful things we find in this world and mix them with a sense of the surreal."



Gia Nguyen Hoang

www.digitalartistdaily.com/user/gunsbins

"I'm a hardworking 23-year-old concept artist based in Vietnam, studying interior design. For the past two years, I've been a totally self-taught concept artist."



Allen Michael Geneta

www.digitalartistdaily.com/user/allentot

"I'm from the Philippines and I currently work as a concept and 3D artist at Ladyluck Digital Media. I got hooked on this industry when I was hired by a small mobile gaming company."

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● Melissa, 2011

RB White Photoshop

"This image was created in two phases. I did the character first with pencil on paper and painted it. And I thought: 'She looks lonely. Maybe she can have a pet', so I extended the canvas and did the dragon directly in Photoshop, painting on the same layer as the rough drawing."

“ I thought: 'She looks lonely. Maybe she can have a pet' ”





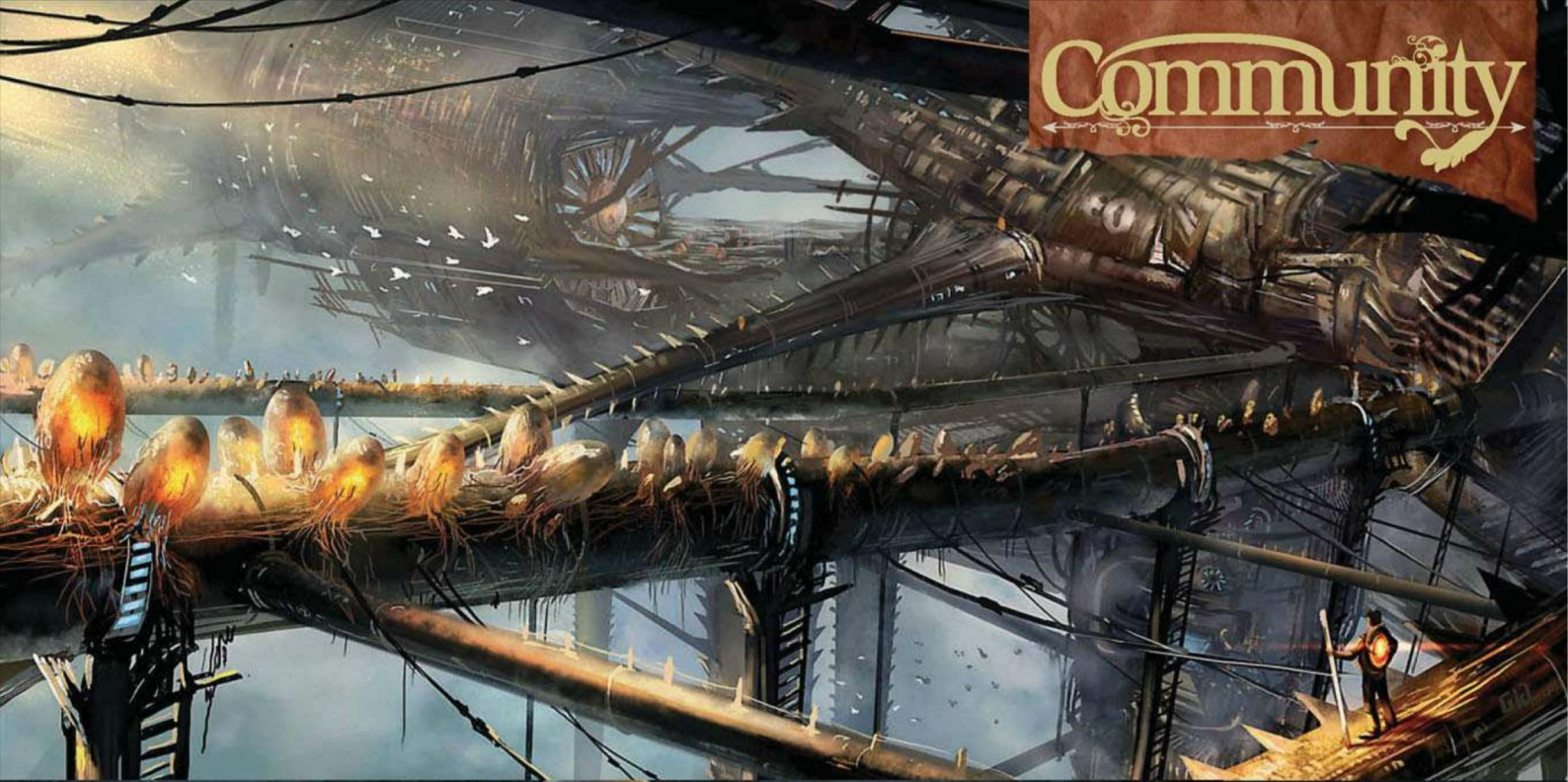
Community



● **Innocent**, 2011

Jennifer Healy Photoshop

"This started out as a colour practice piece. I wanted to use contrasting colours to find a happy balance. Soon the image took on its own form and mind. The title is to mislead until you see her eyes."



● **Dragon Hatchery, 2011**
Gia Nguyen Hoang
 Photoshop

"This concept art of a dragon hatchery aboard a flying ship was originally created for a concept art competition."



● **Lightning Genie, 2010**
Allen Michael Geneta Photoshop

"Lightning Genie was my very first digital painting and it took me eight hours to work on. I took some ideas from the best fantasy artworks I've seen and then incorporated my knowledge with comic-book anatomy and foreshortening, and studied some light and electric effects. This was also my very first recognised work online!"

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Essential creature design

Whether you're designing one critter, a gryphon, a goblin or a whole race of aliens, **Poz Watson** discovers that anatomy is the answer

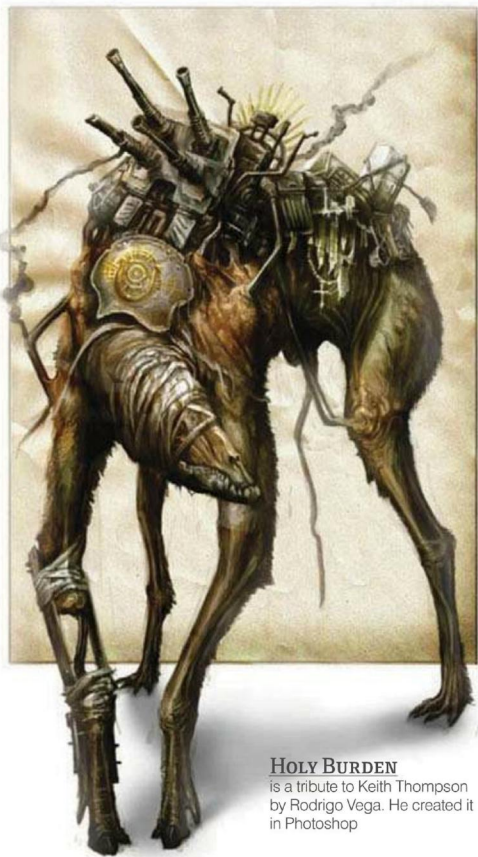
Creature design is at once extremely free and surprisingly restrictive. Since it's fantasy you can, of course, draw anything you can dream, but the artists who work in this area tend to be pretty strict about the believability or 'reality' of their fantasies. In short, anatomy is everything. "You can add anything you want to a fantasy animal", says Amber Hill (vantid.deviantart.com). "You can add jewellery,

clothing, wings, scales next to fur, any element you want... however, common animal behaviour makes them all the more tangible." Creature designer and fine artist Chet Zar (www.chetzar.com) agrees: "Nature is always the best designer. You should look at all aspects of nature to understand how to make things look natural, even the random patterns of clouds or the bark of a tree. Everything in nature is right so all aspects of it are great references for realism, naturalism and 'aliveness'."

"I'm personally as much a fan of science fiction and fantasy as world folklore, biology and paleontology", explains Rodrigo Vega (iririv.deviantart.com). "Those are my main sources of inspiration and reference libraries. Once I know I need a certain kind of creature, say a stalking predator, I start drawing and playing with ideas... that I know exist or existed and have the desirable characteristics."

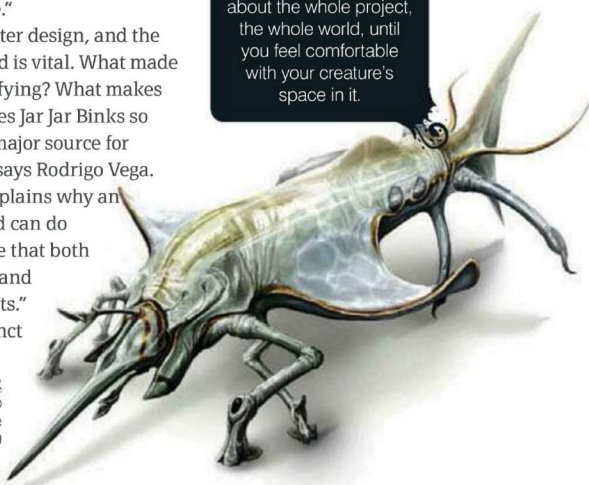
Of course, if the creature is being designed for a film or a game, the goal of workable anatomy and a believable creature is perhaps even more vital, since somewhere down the line the figure will have to be modelled and animated. Zar notes: "I usually start in Photoshop, get the design approved and then move onto a small maquette sculpture."

Creature design is also character design, and the personality and impact conveyed is vital. What made the original Alien queen so terrifying? What makes Dobby so endearing? What makes Jar Jar Binks so annoying? "Real animals are a major source for structure, behaviour and look", says Rodrigo Vega. "Bone structure, for example, explains why an animal looks the way it does and can do what it does. It is not coincidence that both museums and art schools study and display the bones of their subjects." Amber Hill agrees, noting: "Extinct

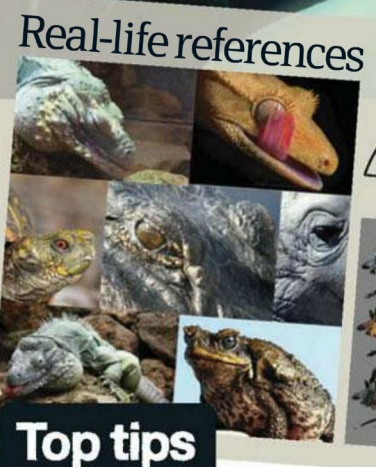


HOLY BURDEN
is a tribute to Keith Thompson by Rodrigo Vega. He created it in Photoshop

BOTTOM WALKER
is another alien designed by Rodrigo Vega. He used Photoshop for the image, which was completed in 2009



SEAWOLVES
Amber Hill created Seawolves in Painter for the 2012 Werewolf Calendar. "The waves and reflection were challenging to paint, as well as the floating fur. I feel that the crisp reflection makes the piece look real", she says



Top tips

THE BIG PICTURE

If you're designing for a game or a movie, you're probably working to someone else's idea. Take the time to think about the whole project, the whole world, until you feel comfortable with your creature's space in it.



“The more familiar I am with anatomy, the more in depth I can get when drawing”

AMBER HILL

CATHEDRAL HEAD

Cathedral Head
maquette for *Hellboy II*
by Chet Zar. Copyright
© Spectral Motion



Enhance your fantasy images with photo guides

Pet is a 2011 piece that Shreya Shetty created in Photoshop. She also made sketches of what he would "look like when he grew up to the fully formed war beast."



Helith is the goddess of the underworld in one of Shreya Shetty's stories. Created using Photoshop in 2011, Shreya wanted to "incorporate crawly-insect aspects into her to reinforce her subterranean habitat and characteristics."

animals are especially useful for creature creation. These are weird... with real and workable anatomy.

"The more familiar I am with anatomy, the more in depth I can get when drawing fantasy animals", says Amber. "I like to imagine how the muscles and bone work together and draw them realistically proportioned based on observation." What's even more interesting is that every level and style of creature designer commits the same amount of effort to constructing a solid anatomy. For concept artist Shreya Shetty (shreyashetty.com), observation of the natural world is absolutely critical. "I spend a good chunk of my time every day just looking through animal and plant photo galleries. I think this helps in building a vast reference library that you can pull from every time you design a creature."

Making and keeping your own references is one of the best ways to get started. Take photos of the wildlife you can see (the wasps in the shed, the slug on the path) and seek out the footage of those you can't (lions taking down zebras, dolphins diving at

Top tips

OBSERVE AND INNOVATE

Observe real creatures – study and learn about them – and then try and come up with fresh ways of depicting them.

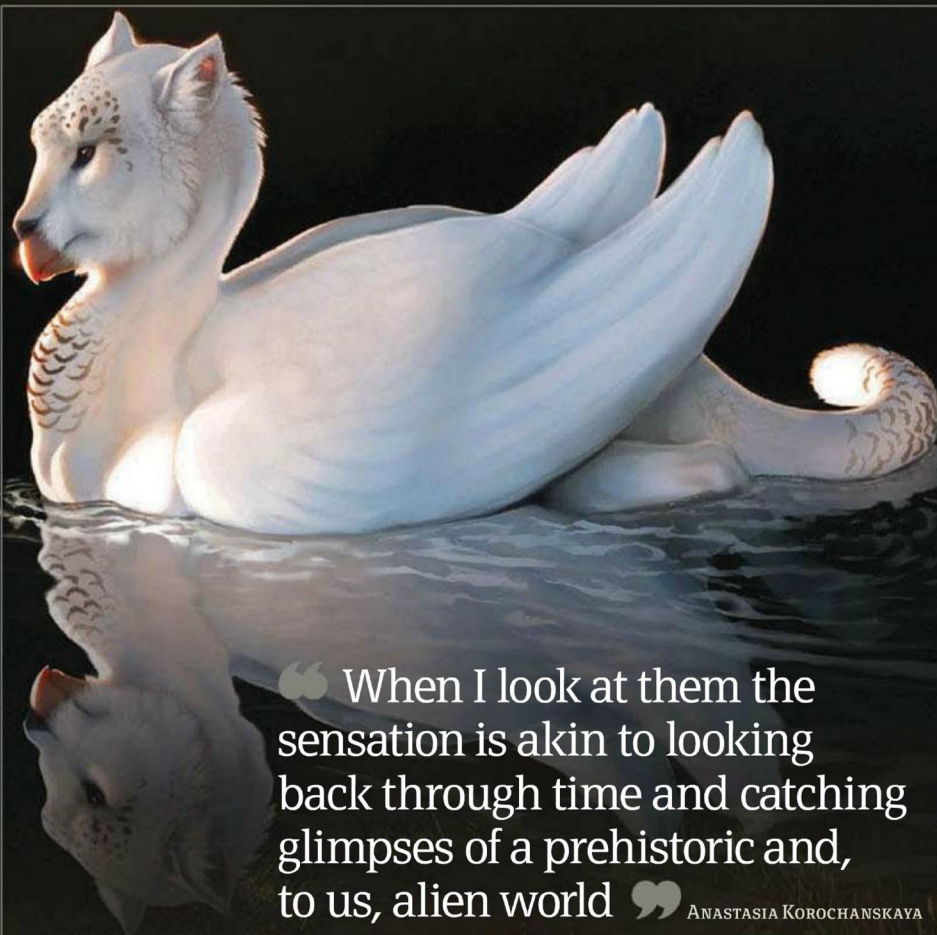
TAKE CARE OF THE DETAILS

Sometimes it's the smallest strokes, such as minute facial muscles perhaps or the touches of the imperfect and rough, that give a creature life.

dusk), keep patterns, poses and pastures. Observe and absorb nature in all of its forms.

"I'm looking for traits that would make a fictional species look neat, be functional and be interesting to someone if they wanted to learn more about the animal", says illustrator Katie Hofgard (shadow-wolf.deviantart.com), "so I'm picking out traits that will lend themselves to this overall functionality... without making it look stitched together."

The trick is to find the details that make the real magical, so that you can make the magical real. "Unique patterns, colour combinations and intense facial expressions... always pique my interest", says fantasy artist Anastasia Korochanskaya (balaa.deviantart.com). "I love looking at the infinite colour and pattern combinations seen in birds and aquatic life. When I look at them the sensation is akin to looking back through time and catching glimpses of a prehistoric and, to us, alien world."



SERENITY

Inspired by snow owls and snow leopards, Serenity is a personal piece by Anastasia Korochanskaya that she created in 2009 using Photoshop

“When I look at them the sensation is akin to looking back through time and catching glimpses of a prehistoric and, to us, alien world”

ANASTASIA KOROCHANSKAYA



Shetty says she never knows what might grab her or why: “I could be looking through a gallery of images and the nose on a Bourret’s Horseshoe bat might stand out. I’d do a bit of research to see why it is the way it is (it emits ultrasonic beams through its nose instead of its mouth like most other bats). The next time I have an idea for a creature that uses echolocation, I can use this knowledge.”

Inspiration can take you in some unusual directions and, though not all your ideas will turn out to be good ones, if you can’t let your fantasy take

flight in fantasy art, then when can you?

Amber says: “The quirks and realities of nature can inspire a fantasy piece. Sometimes I’ll see a hawk in flight, and my mind tacks on a cat butt and then I see a gryphon.” Katie is also keen on exploring her own ideas, no matter how crazy they might seem: “After doing visual research, I start by sketching whatever comes to mind”, she says. “The first few ideas tend to be the most nagging ones, you have to get them out and free up room for more ideas to flow.”



UNFORTUNATE INCIDENT

Katie Hofgard’s Unfortunate Incident shows us the hazards of walking with an MP3 player when you have clawed feet. It was painted in 2012 in Photoshop

Top tips

KEEP CHALLENGING

YOURSELF

Choose a couple of random animals and try to combine them into a new creature, or imagine your friends as animals; what sort of creatures would they be?

USE YOUR

UNCONSCIOUS

Sometimes the more natural creatures will come to you without you forcing it, so let it flow and only review critically afterwards. Your eye has a way of telling you when something feels wrong.

TAKE IT SLOWLY

Rather than diving straight into creature design, take the time to build a strong knowledge of animal anatomy and an appreciation of nature.

Get anatomical and combine your creatures

Creating hybrids of multiple creatures is one of the strongest ways to make new and exciting monsters, as Rodrigo Vega reveals



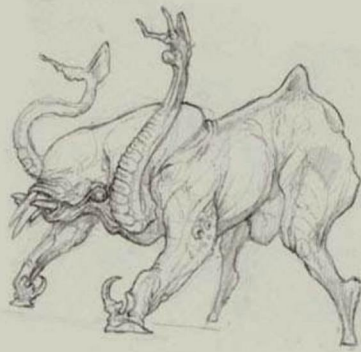
01 **Designing the Verunas** Rodrigo was tasked with designing the Verunas race for upcoming MMORTS game *Novus Aeterno* by Taitale Studios, but he had quite a loose brief so he started sketching in various directions.

Keep making sketches of every shape or combination of traits you can think of for your proposed creature until you find something you really like.”

One of the highlights of Chet Zar’s career to date was his work on *Hellboy II*, because he was given real freedom: “Guillermo del Toro let me design The Chamberlain for *Hellboy II: The Golden Army*. He basically said to me ‘just design it to be worn as a mechanical mask and blend around the actor’s mouth.’ Then he let me do whatever I wanted! I mean, he did have to approve my design but he asked for no changes, which never happens.”

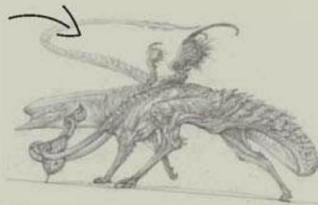
Of course, when you’re working to a brief, there isn’t always so much time to wait for inspiration to strike. Zar explains: “I try to get as much info as possible about the creature that I am designing but it really does depend on the production. Some will say ‘make it like the monster in...’ and some will say ‘try something we haven’t seen before.’”

Doing a bit of both is sometimes the answer, which matches fantasy’s love of the hybrid creature. Rodrigo Vega says that: “The main challenge in creating hybrids is to find new, unexpected combinations that no one [has] thought of before and yet manage to work.” What works is determined not only by the way real animals are, but also by how we perceive what they do. “A Tyrannosaurus might have had a unique behaviour”, Rodrigo explains, “but we can



02 First draft shape "That 'nas' sound at the end [of the name Verunas] sounded kind of like an elephant to me, so I started playing with some pachyderm features, including tusks and the trunk-like tentacles. Also the [suggestion of] large intelligence went well with some dolphin-like features, so I added that too."

03 Posture tweaks Worried that the "short stubby tail and beak made them look... sort of like a chicken", Rodrigo started playing with new designs, and this was the one he liked best. "It had a sleeker build... and could have cat-like movements that I thought would look really good in life."



VERUNAS SKULL

04 Get inside your creature This is the skull of a Verunas that Rodrigo created as a concept preview to be shown at the videogame convention PAX East. It demonstrates how much he needed to know about his creature in order to be able to design it well.

05 Polishing up With the final design signed off, Rodrigo is free to create some concept art for his Verunas. "It depicts the most primitive of the Verunas's survivors", he says.



only really imagine its gait as something like a massive crocodile mounted on an ostrich's legs, animals we have seen alive and moving."

Creature designers who specialise in hybrids even go so far as thinking about how the creature would have evolved. "If you are mixing a reptile and a fish you could expect the creature to be an amphibian", says Rodrigo. "Alternatively, the distinct features could have evolved independently. This works best,

“ Consider the personality first and find an animal to match it ” KATIE HOFGARD

for example, with creatures that do not have a close ancestor, for example a mammal and an insect. In this scenario you would have to choose if the creature is actually an insect with mammal-like features or [vice versa], and figure out how the anatomy of those animals could be modified to reflect the desired characteristic of the other."

To project those desired characteristics, many artists make their creatures anthropomorphic. Katie Hofgard believes that when designing an anthro character, a good approach is to "consider the personality first and find an animal to match it. People's anthro characters are often an expression of themselves, so they may choose animals that closely match their personality." Anastasia Korochanskaya says that she goes for "a very natural approach with my anthropomorphic creatures so the anatomy will lean more towards animal rather than human. I will typically not exaggerate the anatomy, [avoiding] caricatured musculature or the use of supernatural qualities. The human influences are usually seen in the proportions of the limbs, how they are posed, their adornments and the scenario."

Just like anatomy is what (literally) underpins creature design, believability is what determines its success. "The more believable an animal is the more [viewers] invest in the painting, movie or game that the creature is in", says Katie Hofgard. "For movie goers and game players, this is especially important." That said, Katie continues: "Believability is very subjective. Some have an easier time believing a creature looks real and can ignore



ALICAT

A 2010 Photoshop reimagining of the classic scene in *Alice in Wonderland*. Shreya Shetty says she "always found the caterpillar really intriguing"

RESOURCES AND INSPIRATION

BBC Motion Gallery

www.bbcmotiongallery.com

Want to see animals in searing slow motion? Allow the BBC to help with this archive, filled with high-quality footage.

Polar Bear Cam

animals.nationalgeographic.com/animals/polar-bear-cam

Visit this site and you can access live (and recorded) footage of one of nature's most regal creatures.

Wildlife Pictures Online

www.wildlife-pictures-online.com

A mountainous collection of photos of African wildlife. Creating a mongoose character? This is the site for you.

Steve Bloom

www.stevebloom.com

Superb, high-quality photos of all kinds of wildlife from some of the best photographers in the world.

10 Videos On How to Draw Animals

www.slodive.com/design/how-to-draw-animals

Top tips and tricks showing you how to base your creature designs around your favourite four-legged friend.

How to draw a dragon

www.youtube.com/watch?v=tsgClqMGqPE

Go from a blank canvas to a fully formed dragon drawing with this excellent 37-minute video tutorial.

things that might make others think it seems fake. For instance, I saw a movie once with incredibly well-done CG mammoths in it, they looked very real. However they had been animated galloping in the same motion a horse gallops, which living elephants can't do. It stripped any believability they had and made the entire thing seem ridiculous." It all comes back to anatomy. "Once you 'get' anatomy", says Shreya Shetty, "you can start pushing it in ways that might make the creature look strange and alien but still believable, like it could exist. Also, thinking like an animator helps... visualise how the creature moves, sits, eats and so on when you design it."

How the creature eats, sits, kills and everything else is key, or rather the artist knowing all of that information is. Rodrigo says he likes to go into "ridiculous detail about the internal organs, cultural background and evolutionary lineage." Amber wants to know "what my critter was doing just before the sketch, and then what it's going to do right after. This

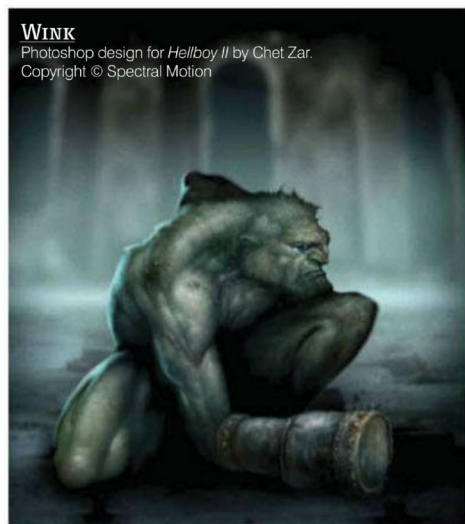
helps me get into the mind of the beast and really feel the gesture."

Obviously it depends on the creature and the circumstance whether you need to know everything about them, but "if you spend all your time designing the creature's appearance to make them look cool and unique and forget to think what natural processes drive their behaviour, look, their environment or what emotions you wish the viewer to feel when they are looking at them, they will inevitably feel like half-alive, one-dimensional cutouts pasted into a space in which they do not live", warns Anastasia.

“How the creature eats, sits, kills and everything else is key”

Avoiding fantasy clichés is obviously another must. Chet Zar's particular bugbear is 'angry brow'. He explains: "Too many creatures suffer from angry-brow syndrome – it's an epidemic!... I don't think [this look] is as scary (which is usually what I am going for) as, say, a blank or weird expression."

Creature design is a tricky beast to tackle, but the rewards are huge, so take Rodrigo Vega's advice to heart: "There are two main points that make a creature stand out. Creativity and execution... Either one can be there and make a design good, but both are required to really make a design great."



WINK

Photoshop design for *Hellboy II* by Chet Zar. Copyright © Spectral Motion

Design a creature of your own

Fantasy artist Anastasia Korochanskaya brings together a moth and a lion to create this cute king of the clover patch

01 Brewing an idea From this initial sketch, the basics of the character are in place. Anastasia collected images of moths and lions over the years and formed "a subconscious association between the Polyphemus moth and lion cubs."



02 Reflections and revisions "Sometimes I will toss all the ideas I have for a creature into a single sketch and make final design decisions as I paint", Anastasia says. The background was "a serious challenge to the piece. I want the little critter to stand out against his surroundings but simultaneously mesh."



03 Background touches "The shift towards a blue background makes the tawny reds of the critter stand out so he doesn't seem bland... The blue highlights in the wings and eyes also mesh very well." She paints with a soft brush to create a blurred effect.



04 Scale and sparkle Anastasia beds her lion in clovers, which "gives the impression that he is very small... this lends the piece an air of fantasy in which the viewer is meant to feel... drawn to the creature." One of the final touches was the light sparkles around the creature, which bring the piece to life. The image was completed in 2005 using Photoshop.

Fantasy meets reality

Katie Hofgard combines the two in this fun image

This 2012 piece from Katie Hofgard seamlessly blends a kangaroo and a dragon, but is more than the sum of its parts, with a real sense of personality. Katie created the "super tough kangaroo-esque creature" for a private client.



Strike a pose

"It's all about personality and action", says Katie. "You can design the coolest creature out there, [but] it's not very neat if it's just standing there. Something only seems alive if you believe it's alive. Real animals don't do a lot of just standing around, so neither should your critters."

The devil in the details

It's details like these metal rings and gloves that give an image like this life. Although the kangadragon doesn't have emphasised human features, these touches reveal that there is some degree of technical know-how.

From top to bottom

Katie works in Photoshop with roughly the same layers on all her images. From top to bottom, they are: "Paint/details (layer set to Normal), highlights and bounce light (Overlay), shadows/midtones (Multiply), cleaned-up sketch (Multiply), local colour (Normal) and finally background (usually something neutral so it's easier on my eyes while I sketch)."

Colour up

Colour is, of course, crucial to the design and believability of a creature, and here the dragon-ness is highlighted in the choice of palette. Picking colours and patterns that already exist in nature is a good way to make your creature believable, but equally using this more unusual purple has the effect of making him stand out.

Animal behaviour

Once Katie has sketched and worked out the basic design of her creature, she turns her attention to "gesture sketches of that creature doing something it might do, like grooming or drinking water, perhaps pursuing prey or running away from a predator." This fighting – almost showing off – stance takes us right into the heart of the character.

Paint a pin-up warrior

Chester Ocampo shows you how to paint a strong and sexy fantasy warrior

Goblin Hunter

Photoshop



A strong and sexy female warrior is one of the most fun subjects to paint. They're particularly fun to work on because you have the scope to play with different materials and details. As it's a pin-up and not a narrative scene, the primary focus of the image is the subject. Among the several elements of the image, the subject's pose is one of the most important devices to communicate her strength and sexiness. The costume details, of course, definitely enhance and amplify these attributes.

Fantasy costumes usually take inspiration from past civilisations and cultures, both real and imagined. This particular image mixes and matches costume elements from various sources. Since

the main objective was to create a pin-up warrior, the historical accuracy or practicality of the costume elements are a lower priority – her strength and sexiness take the spotlight. With that in mind, the placement and design of her costume are created to accentuate her body. Large areas of skin are revealed, with minimal armour such as an arm-guard, thigh-guard and bikini plate mail. Admittedly, these elements are not practical for battle, but hey, it's a pin-up! It's not meant to be taken too seriously and doesn't attempt to depict historical fact.

When it comes to pin-ups, especially fantasy pin-ups, realism is never the aim. To serve its function the pin-up just has to be engaging and make you believe that the character is in that situation, wearing those clothes and holding that weapon. Any narrative or story elements in this pin-up image are merely implied, unlike a battle or war scene, where there's heavy interaction among the characters and environment.

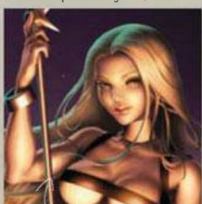
WORKING PROGRESS



Step 01, Strike a pose



Step 12, Merge layers



Step 17, Refine details

CHESTER OCAMPO

Artist info



chesterocampo.net
Chester Ocampo is a freelance illustrator based in Manila. His commercial work is comprised of print illustrations, concept art and art direction for videogames. All of his illustrations are created using digital software.





Sketch and tone

Get the composition and values down

01 Thumbnails Start by making some composition sketches for your piece. These sketches don't have to be overly detailed, but clean and clear enough to be understandable.



03 Rough lines From the chosen composition sketch, draw the image more carefully. The level of detail at this stage will depend on the client's preference if working to a brief. Some prefer extremely detailed lines that define each element of the illustration – costume, background, rocks, mountains – whereas some allow a lower level of detail. If it is a personal artwork it is up to your judgement how much detail to include.



05 Assign tones Using the colour flats, separate the image in terms of spatial relationships. The lightest tone should be your subject and the darkest your farthest background element. You can mix these up (light for background, dark for subject), but keep in mind that this will alter the way the image is viewed as well as the mood.



04 Colour flats Underneath the rough lines layer, create flat patches of colour that block in specific parts of the image. For the subject, that means creating colour flats for her skin, hair and costume. For the background elements, that means separating them into levels of foreground, mid-ground, background and sky. Group these layers accordingly for easier access and organisation.



06 Main light source Assign a light source for your image. For this illustration, an out-of-frame bonfire casts a strong, warm light on our warrior. The position of the light source determines how and where shadows are cast, while the strength of the source determines the brightness of the highlights and the darkness of the shadows.



07 Secondary light source As this is an outdoor scene, there are other light sources in the area aside from the bonfire. A cloud-covered moon and sky cast a cold, diffused light on the tops and edges of objects. The depiction of this secondary source adds extra definition to the shapes, textures and materials in the scene.



02 Strike a pose Since the subject is a strong and sexy fantasy warrior woman, each of those qualities must be expressed visually. She is strong in her proud stance and firm musculature, sexy in her sultry gaze and revealing outfit, and the otherworldly backdrop, evil castle and goblin head enhance the sense of fantasy. Her curves, costume details, weapon and pile of skulls tell us that this is not only a warrior, but a woman.

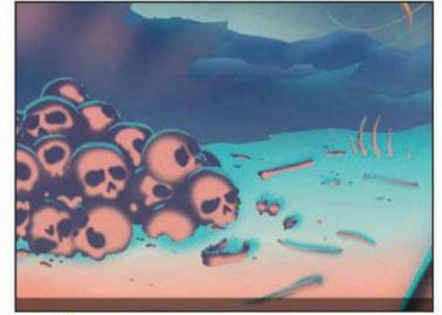
CHECK WITH YOUR CLIENT

If you are working to a commissioned brief, communication with the client is important; you've been hired to do a job, and the client needs to know how the image is shaping up. You don't have to show them each stroke you paint, but it is mandatory to show them major progress points, for both of your sakes.

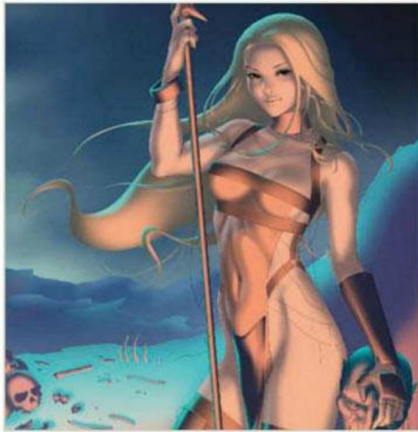


08 Choose a colour palette The bonfire casts an orange light on the subject and its immediate vicinity. Using orange as a starting point, pick other colours that will complement this hue but that are not too similar in terms of colour range – orange, purple and green suit this particular scene well. Assign green to your secondary light source and purple for the shadows.

09 Assign colours to objects Going back to the layer of colour flats established earlier in the process, now assign specific colours to individual objects (yellow for the hair, tan for the skin, blue-green for the goblin head). You can break down the colour flats layer into smaller pieces, with each individual hue having its own layer.



10 Rough lighting Using a large round airbrush and a layer set to Screen, paint a rough approximation of where the lights and shadows will fall, keeping in mind the position and strength of the light sources. For your sanity, it's best to keep each light source on a separate layer, and paint the lighting's tones one source at a time.



11 Set the material The character's costume is comprised of different materials, with different attributes such as reflectivity and texture. Assign materials to the different aspects of the costume early on – leather for the straps, metal for the armour, wool for the cloth and so on. These assigned materials will determine how you render the shadows and highlights of each part.



12 Merge layers Duplicate the lighting layers and merge them with each of the layers that you created for your colour flats. This gives each of the lighting layers its own colour palette, from which you'll be picking hues and blending the strokes.



13 Deep shadows For corners and areas that do not receive any light (such as the skulls by the ravine), the shadows are deep and rich. These deep shadows further define the form of the objects.

KEEP IT IN LAYERS

One of the biggest advantages of digital painting is the ability to keep elements of the image on separate layers. This helps to organise the elements, making it easier to paint objects individually and allowing visual tricks like depth of field to be applied. Always name, group and stack your layers as you work.

Tutorial

Paint a pin-up warrior



14 Add some highlights

For areas that receive the fullest amount of light from the main and secondary sources, the highlights are bright. The brightness of the highlights is greatly influenced by the object's material. For example, metal objects will have brighter and sharper highlights compared to leather-textured ones.



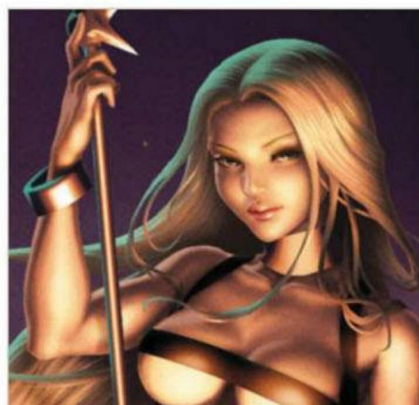
INITIAL VISION

Ever have that moment where your finished artwork suddenly looks quite different from how you pictured it in your head? Don't worry. As long as you're happy with the final result, the resemblance it holds to your initial vision is a secondary concern. Make changes because the final result is what matters.



16 Adjustment layers To tweak the entire image's appearance, apply a few adjustment layers at the top of the stack. These adjustment layers lend cohesion to the piece. Try Curves, Gradient Map and Brightness/Contrast adjustment layers, with different opacities and layer blending modes. Since these are all separate, you can always make changes to the settings later on.

15 Special effects The off-camera bonfire emits sparks and embers on the bottom part of the image. To create these embers, use a brush with different levels of Scattering and random opacity values, set the layer blend mode to Linear Dodge and apply an Outer Glow layer style. These special effects can also be created on separate layers so they can be manipulated individually.



17 Refine details Refine the painting strokes for each element of the image. Since the focus is the warrior woman, her face, weapon and costume should be the most detailed.



18 Sketch reference Before painting the finer details, it's good to look back at your initial sketch to see which details go well with the image you've been making so far and ensure you're on track. Some of the details from the early sketch will make it to the final cut, while some will not.



19 Separate armour elements Break down some of the pieces of her armour into separate pieces. The arm guard and thigh guard, each with their individual layers, can then be broken down into even smaller pieces, again each with their own layer. The colour palette of each piece is based on the hue from the original colour flats layers.



Finishing touches

Add costume details and background elements



20 Intricate costume Create new layers for all the additional bits of costume that may or may not have come from the initial sketch. These new layers should have their own material, textures and colour palettes, all of which have been developed from your existing costume design.

23 Extreme detailing Zoom in on the subject and, using a small brush, fix stray strokes, sharpen blurry transitions and soften the blending of sharp transitions wherever applicable. Pay close attention here to the subject's overall silhouette and important details like the face and weapon. This is the last stage of painting, so make sure you're satisfied with the finishing touches.



21 Deeper shadows, sharper highlights Now that all the costume elements are in place, it's time to add the deepest shadows and brightest highlights. Paint the deepest corners with a low-opacity black brush and the shiniest objects with a low-opacity white brush. You can also use the Dodge and Burn tools for this stage, but it is advised to use them sparingly as it's quite easy to go overboard and ruin the image.



22 Paint background elements With most of the subject completely rendered, it's time to shift your attention to the background. Paint the elements using a smaller brush, making sure that each of the background elements are consistent with the light sources and materials assigned as you proceed to increase the detail.



24 Merge to groups Merge the layer sets into specific groups in the Layers palette such as all of subject layers, the background, mid-ground and so on. Apply a Gaussian Blur filter on the background layers, increasing the blur amount depending on the distance from the subject. Duplicate the subject layers, apply a Smart Sharpen filter and erase the effect from parts using a Soft Round brush.



25 Colour correction Returning to the adjustment layers, tweak the settings, opacities and blending modes of these layers to get the best results. Copy and paste the entire image onto a new layer, apply Auto-Levels and Auto-Tone and then tweak the opacity or blending mode. Flatten your entire image into one layer and save it out.

WORKING PROGRESS



Step 02, Capture the sketch



Step 06, Dark eyes, dark soul



Step 12, Magic modes

Magical manga effects



Schin Loong reveals how to create supernatural effects in your manga drawings

The Blue Sorceress

Photoshop, Painter

SCHIN LOONG

Artist info



www.schin-art.com

I started drawing pretty girls after watching *Sailor Moon* as a child. Now I work as an illustrator in Las Vegas and try to draw more whenever I have the time. If I could have a magic power, I'd choose the power to implant the song *The Final Countdown* into my enemies' heads.



We all grew up with magic as children. Fairytales, nursery rhymes, cartoons and songs stir our imagination and every child has fantasised about having magical powers. But how do you portray such hidden powers in a painting? Japanese manga has been especially successful in this by manipulating colour, depth and special effects. The clean, simple lines of manga lend themselves well to magical effects because they provide a strong foundation for you to build on with colour – and tones and values should be key factors in a magically themed piece. The values should be dramatic, hinting at the arcane powers that your character is summoning up and the colours should be shimmering and otherworldly to enhance this.

Having a strong action pose for the character also helps present the powerful magic that is happening; no self-respecting magician would just stand there

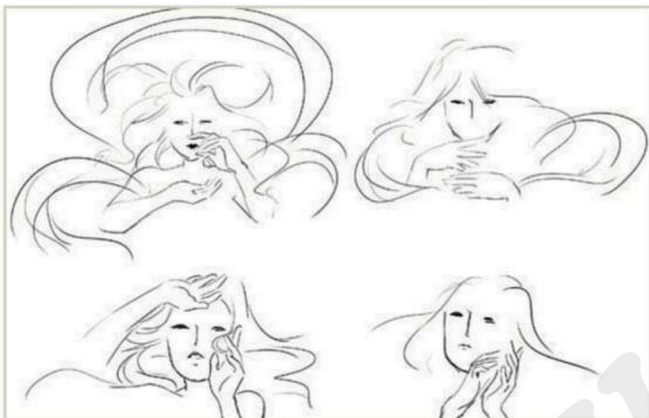
slouching when casting a spell! Consider that the magic your character is using is a form of energy and, just like every other kind of energy, that will be expressed within their pose. If your character is hurling fireballs, for example, that's going to take more exertion than if they're swirling cosmic smoke, so communicate the level of effort they're making through their stance to express it effectively.

The magic itself should look and feel tactile – the viewer should have a sense of whether it's hot or cold, gentle or aggressive, slowly building or ready to strike. You can manage all of these effects through your use of colour, lighting, opacity and shape – all of these hints are useful for the viewer to understand the context of the painting and should be fully utilised by the artist. Here we will go through the steps to create this mysterious blue sorceress who is casting beautiful lightning from her hands.



Sketch your ideas

Decide on your character's personality and paint accordingly



01 Sketch poses

First come up with some simple sketches of how you want your character to pose. This character is a mysterious blue sorceress, who may or may not be evil, but we want her to be beautiful and deliberate in her spell casting. Have her looking directly at the viewer while holding her hands up.



02 Capture the sketch Choose one of the sketches and expand upon it a little more. Build up where to place the hair and the hands, and add some details like jewellery and bangles.



Build up the mood

Bring in colour and form befitting a sorceress

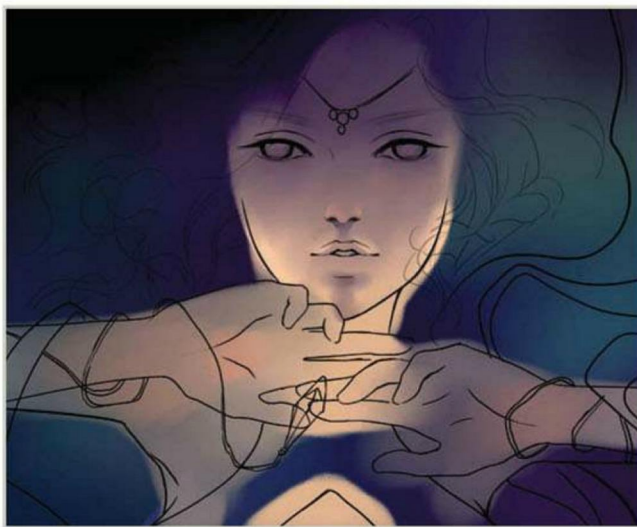
03 Clean it up Now you will need to clean up the line art with stronger, more deliberate strokes so it will be easier to paint over. We've left the hair and eyebrows alone as they are meant to be fine and flexible.



04 Set the mood Set the line art layer to Multiply and place a layer under it to be the background. This will largely dictate the mood of the painting. We want this sorceress to be cold, mysterious and commanding, so choose a gradient of suitable blues, greens and mysterious hues. These will help strengthen her personality and aura.



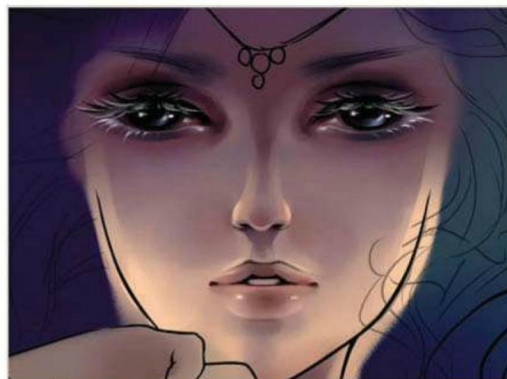
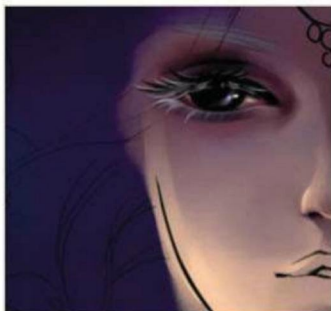
05 Block out the skin Block out the skin colour but keep as many of the underlying blue tones visible as possible so that she integrates well into the surroundings instead of floating up over them. We want the light source to come from her hands, which will have the effect of lighting her face from underneath – another trick to make her look imposing and mysterious.



LAYER STYLES

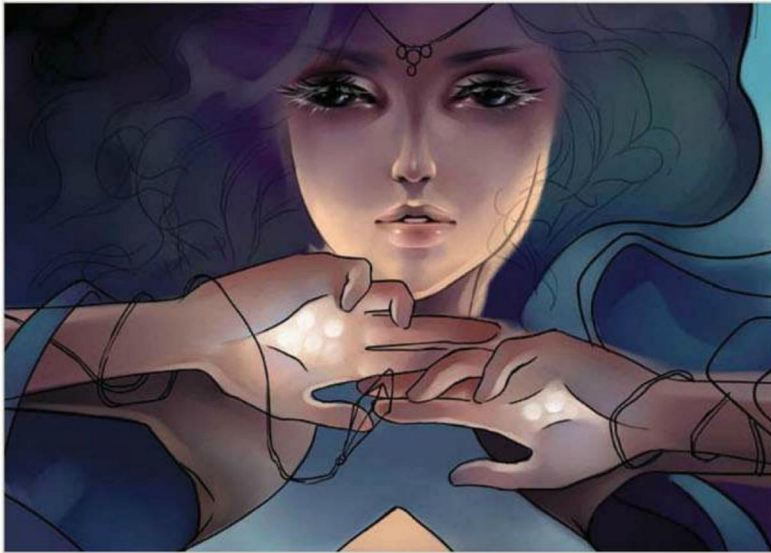
Experiment with everything Photoshop has to offer, from filters to layer styles, brush presets and image adjustments to get as familiar as you can with this program. If you get stumped there are tons of resources and tutorials that will help you form the perfect painting. Spend a little time researching these to build up your creative techniques.

06 Dark eyes, dark soul Start with the face first, shading in the eyes and nose and painting on very dark eye make-up. We want to make it so dark that you can barely see her eyes. To add to her uniqueness, give her white eyelashes over dark eyeliner.



07 Finish up the face Little white highlights in the eyes are all that's needed to bring life to her face. Be careful not to overdo it, though, as you don't want her to look too sparkly. A touch of light here and there should be enough. Keep her lips nude so they don't distract from her eyes too much.

08 Peripheral tweaks Lighten up the dress and scarves and experiment with lighter hair. Brighten up her hands (where her magic will be strongest) and add some points of light on them to remind yourself where the light source will be coming from.



09 Erase the line art If you find that the thick line art is getting distracting, you can erase the majority of it at this stage. Make other adjustments, for example you can change the colour of her hair to white to contrast with the dark background and add a bit of a sexy blush to her eyes and lips.



10 Change your mind and edit

The beauty of working digitally is that you can make changes at any stage of the process. Try making her larger for more impact and also play with the colours. Saturating the colours and highlighting her hands can help emphasise where exactly all the power of the magic is focused.



11 Tweak textures

Centre your character more and embellish the flowing scarves around her to create a kind of frame. Lay a smoke texture over the painting to create movement and finally paint bright points of highlights to place her in an eerie atmosphere.

Style School
Art genres in a nutshell

Magical characters

Explore images of beautiful sorceresses throughout the ages

There have been many examples of artists depicting supernatural power and magic throughout history. Learning from these pieces you will come to see that your characters don't necessarily have to be depicted as active all the time. Your sorceress can appear just as powerful sitting down if you take inspiration from these images and show their power in another way.



Artist: **Georges Merle**
Title: **L'Envoûteuse**

Date: **1883**

Location/Owner: **Birmingham Museum of Art**

● This painting just screams occult power! Look at her surroundings, the foreboding skull is a dead giveaway. Her pose and piercing eyes give her an eerie presence, as if we had disturbed her in the middle of a spell. The painting is quite realistic and you can really feel her unwavering gaze upon you even with the most cursory glance.

tinyurl.com/da-merle



Artist: **Henry Meynell Rheam**
Title: **The Sorceress**

Date: **1898**

Location/Owner: **Private collection**

● Similar to Merle's sorceress, this painting has a lot of power, but in a different way. Her pose is still very commanding and stern, but the painting is rendered in watercolour, so the smoke swirling around her fades gradually into her hair.

tinyurl.com/da-rheam



Artist: **Utagawa Kuniyoshi**
Title: **Mitsukuni Defying the Skeleton Spectre Invoked by Princess Takiyasha**

Date: **1844**

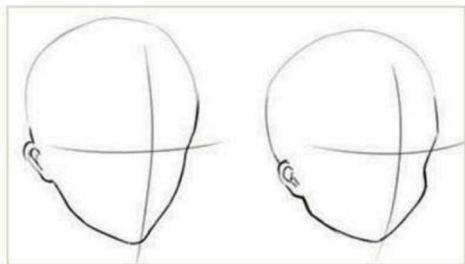
Location/Owner: **The British Museum**

● Here is a ukiyo-e sorceress from Japan summoning a horrifying skeleton. She is holding a scroll and reading the magical incantation to invoke the spirit. Though small in the image itself, her gestures are obvious and full of character.

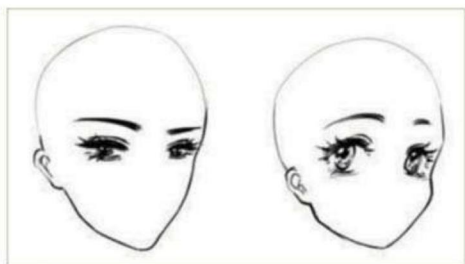
tinyurl.com/da-kuniyoshi

Manga expressions

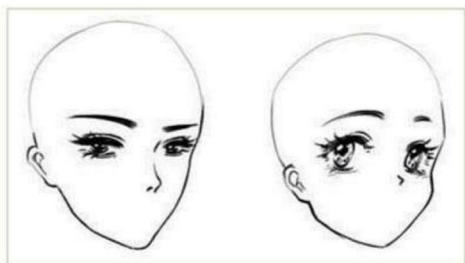
Manga may seem simple, but every line has a meaning



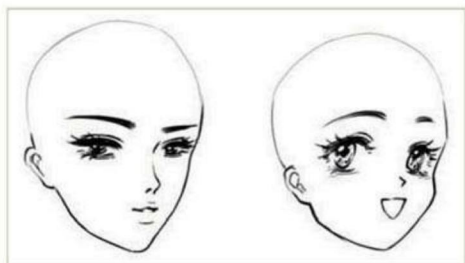
01 Facial shapes A longer, slender face is a more mature and feminine sorceress. A rounded, chubby face suggests a clumsy but cute apprentice.



02 Eyes Smaller, darker and longer eyes suggest a sultry glance. Bright, large eyes are innocent and cute. Arching eyebrows can suggest a cheerful face.

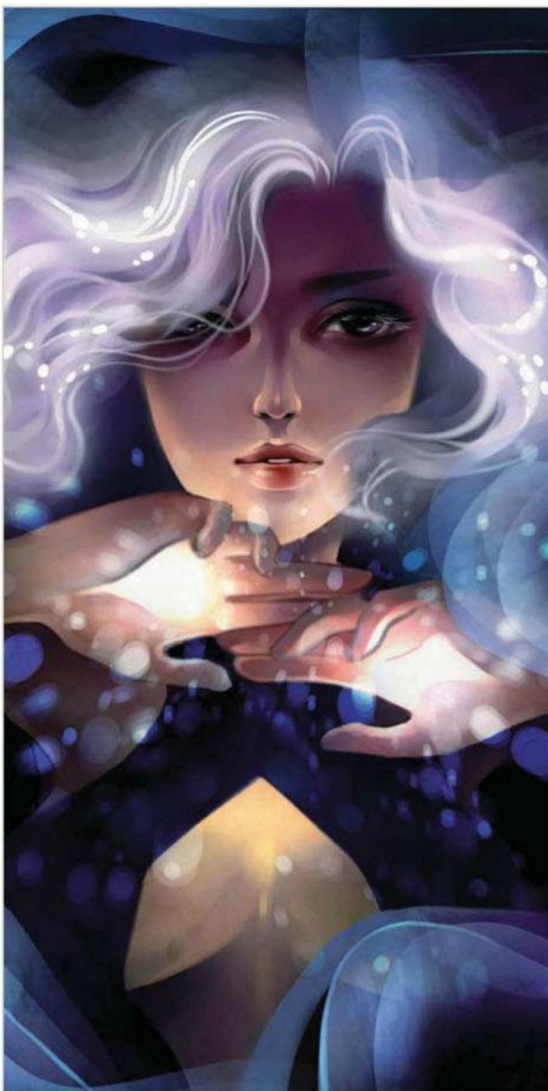


03 Noses Our sexy sorceress has a perky, long nose that fits her mature face shape, but our innocent student magician has a tiny, cute nose.



04 Mouth and expression When smiling mysteriously, mouths are small and demure. When laughing, a manga mouth can form a perfect triangle.

12 Magic modes Create some highlights and experiment with various blending modes for the layers – we chose Color Dodge and Overlay. A few strands of glowing hair finish the effect.



13 Glows and special effects

Using the Outer Glow layer effect, paint dots swarming out of her hands. These really contrast with the dark painting to stand out. Also play some more with the background and change the colours to enhance the sense of a magical environment.

IT'S OKAY TO CHANGE

Don't be afraid to merge layers, make composition changes or delete entire elements if they are no longer useful to the painting. It's important to keep the momentum and flow going and not to worry too much about achieving the perfect painting. Keep file backups in case you don't like any tweaks you make along the way.

14 Lightning Now for the fun part. Add white lightning streaks coming out of her hands to seal her sorcery. Create a new layer, set it to Outer Glow and just go for it!



15 Touching up To finish, tweak the details, enhance her eyes even more and make some compositional adjustments. Erase some of the lightning if you feel it's detracting from the effect and continue adjusting until totally happy.

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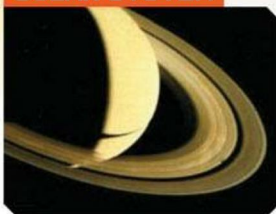
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EXPLORATION



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Tutorial

Action-packed combat scenes

BEN PRENEVOST

Artist info



prenevoststudios.com

Ben is a freelance artist working in comics, games, concept and commercial art. Specialising in digital colouring, he has also worked as a graphic artist and dabbles in most visual and media arts. Ben is also developing his own fantasy graphic novel.

Action-packed combat scenes

Ben Prenevost renders radiant flames, bold colour slashes and deep cuts of light to create this comic-book inspired tavern scrap

You Killed my Brother and Stole his Coin

Photoshop

P

ainting a believable action scene requires consistency between your line art and colour style, with strong composition and a dynamic lighting design. Here we're after a comic-book style illustration of a male and female barbarian just on the cusp of a tavern duel. Kick things off by conceptualising a layout in Photoshop. Digital concepts make the process of developing an idea and revising the piece quicker and easier, so take advantage. The horizon, for example, was adjusted at the concept stage from a straight one to an angle to enhance the scene's excitement. Keeping the background tight and characters large on the page means we have to fit in obvious clues to set the story. The wooden counter, a keg of ale, tankards, the tipping table and the stools all give a strong sense of the location. The characters had to appear powerful and ready to strike too, so to bring more movement and action, the garments and hair are rendered as unsettled by motion. Scattering a warm meal by tipping the table improves upon this idea as well.

With this style of art you can greatly exaggerate colour and light to set the mood. The entire piece could be bathed in red tones, for instance. However, let's approach this particular piece with a little more

basis in reality, while allowing some play with the lighting and colour to keep things fun and exciting. To help draw attention to the main characters, more light is added on their faces and they are lit with a harder light than a real fire of this size might emit. The use of the colour red, the contrast of their skin and the added bloom effects help to draw attention and enhance the focal point as well as the sense of violence. The arm and torso of the male barbarian with the position of the fire frame the woman, while the light from the moon and a bit of the lantern's glow help to define him effectively.

This is one of the rendering approaches used in colouring comics and is very much based on traditional airbrushing. We're going to focus mainly on the use of the Lasso tool and the Brush tool set to the Screen blend mode. This method of masking and brushing is called making cuts, and these tools will be used to define form in the tutorial while keeping a tonal balance throughout the piece.

Starting from very dark and muted base tones and a limited number of highlights, you'll learn how to build form, add ambient and reflective light and render glow effects for the finishing touch on this comic-styled, fantasy illustration.

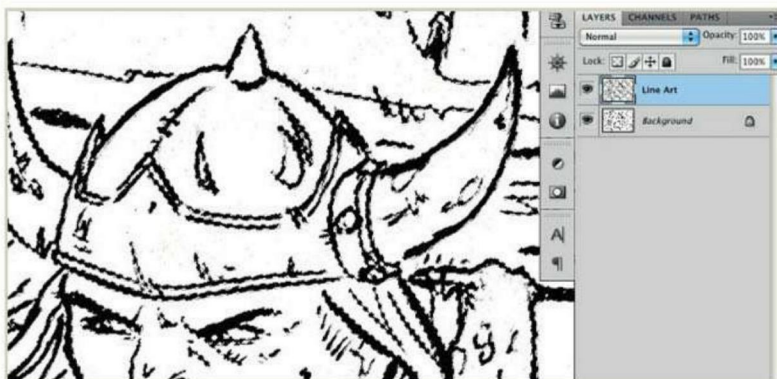




Challenge accepted

Set up the line art and start with a dark base

01 Prepare for battle Compose and sketch your scene on paper and scan it in, or work entirely digitally. Flatten the image and convert your one layer to Grayscale mode. Create a new layer and name it Line Art and then, from the Select menu, choose Load Selection. Set the channel to Background Gray, check the Invert option and fill the selection with 100% black.



02 Clean the line art Switch back to the Background layer, select all, fill with 100% white and deselect, renaming the layer Flats. Convert to RGB colour mode and choose Don't Flatten when prompted. We now have a two-layer setup with a Line Art layer and a Flats layer beneath, ready to drop some solid colour fills on to set the tones.



03 Ready your weapons Grab the Lasso, set its Feather value to 0 and uncheck Anti-aliasing. For this stage we want the colour flats hard edged with jaggies. Grab the Magic Wand and set it to 0 Tolerance, uncheck anti-aliasing, Contiguous and Sample All Layers, and choose the same settings for the Paint Bucket tool.



04 Colour block With the Flats layer selected, zoom to about 75%, grab the Lasso and hold Opt/Alt to switch to the Polygonal Lasso when needed. Start by selecting the wooden beam, pick a colour and fill or use Opt/Alt+Backspace to colour it. Opt/Alt+Backspace fills the entire selection while the Paint Bucket only fills like pixels.



05 Select the roof The outline of the wood and the bottom edge of the thatched roof were created with the previous selection, so we can lasso this section while cutting through the wood. Carefully trace the edge of the axe blade then Paint Bucket fill the thatch selection. Thanks to the tool settings the colours become seamlessly adjacent.

WORK WITH SELECTION MASKS

You can create selection masks of full characters, objects or planes of the image by adding all of the associated flat tones into one large selection. Use the selection to create an Alpha channel or an adjustment layer. These large masks really help if you want to add more separation between objects, make sweeping colour changes or increase depth between planes.



06 Set the base tones Continue these steps making selections of your line art and blocking each object in with a different base tone, keeping in mind the overall values. You don't need to choose the perfect colours at this point as you will adapt them, but keep focused on the intended mood – in our case warm and muted tones prevail.



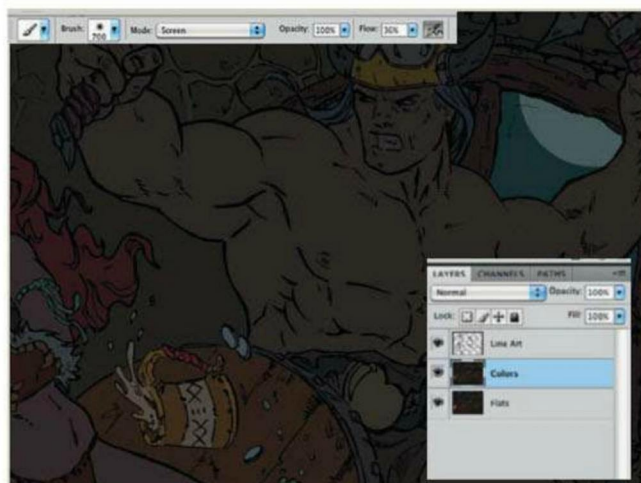
07 Stone details Almost there but we still need to do a little work on the back walls. Enter Quick Mask mode and grab the Pencil with Shape Dynamics on. Create a mask by pencilling the stones and exit Quick Mask. With the Magic Wand, hold Shift+Opt/Alt and click on these lines. Fill the mask with a darker value and deselect.



08 Colour selections After some tweaking with Paint Bucket fills and Hue/Saturation adjustments, the tones in your piece should be very dark and each object should have an individual colour, making it easy to select with the Magic Wand. Now we'll build it up with shapes of coloured light.

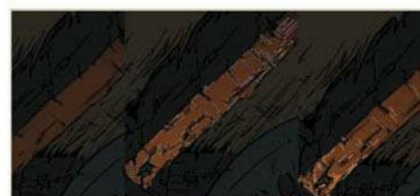


09 Observe the environment Before painting, take a look at the light sources. The main source in this piece will be the fireplace. The lantern will give off a smaller amount of light and the moon will shine through the window. We'll add some reflective light so the shadows from the fireplace aren't too dark to keep the piece vibrant.



10 Grab your weapons

Duplicate the Flats layer and name the new layer Colours. Set your Brush tool to Screen mode, 0% Hardness, 700px Diameter, 100% Opacity and 35% flow. Other Dynamics is checked with 0% Jitter. Screen mode is essentially like painting with light; colours get brighter as you work. We'll mostly paint with saturated tones for firelight.



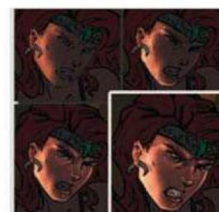
11 The first cut Lasso the bottom plane of the wooden beam. If your selection overlaps other objects, use the Magic Wand with the Intersect Selection option (Shift+Opt/Alt-click). Start with a large brush to lightly paint the first highlights with a bright, saturated orange. This is known as a cut. Make a new, smaller cut that follows the nuances of the wood and brush with the same colour. Add little scratches, grain markings, reduce the size and increase the detail of your cuts as you build form.



12 Defend the walls Pick a slightly less-saturated orange with a little more yellow to paint in the roof's highlights. Grab the orange hue from step 11 and paint the stone walls and other elements. Switch between the bright orange and the more yellow tone. The variation in base tones will give objects their own look. Lightly brush blue-green into some of the shadows to help create the illusion of depth.



13 Cutting the chest We're going to render the barbarians a little sweaty, but as they've only just started fighting they won't be dripping. Cut a section of the male's chest and brush with R:196, G:63, B:36. Make smaller cuts that go lighter to define the form and add specular highlights on the contours of his muscles. Continue this method to complete all of his skin. Now cut and brush a broad yet subtle ambient and reflected light with R:196, G:62, B:45. Cut in small specular highlights across his body with the same reflected hue to get that slightly sweaty look.



14 Paint ambient light effects

Painting an angry female face can be a challenge. We still want a pleasant look about her, so we'll keep her cuts softer than the man's. With the same R:196, G:63, B:36 colour, brush in definition where the light catches her face while reducing the brush size to increase detail. Add a few subtle highlight cuts to keep a consistent look. In the shadow area add the ambient hue that we used in the previous step, but keep it subtle to produce a softer look. Continue with the rest of her skin allowing the reflected cuts to get a little sharper on her legs to enhance the look of the sweat on her skin.

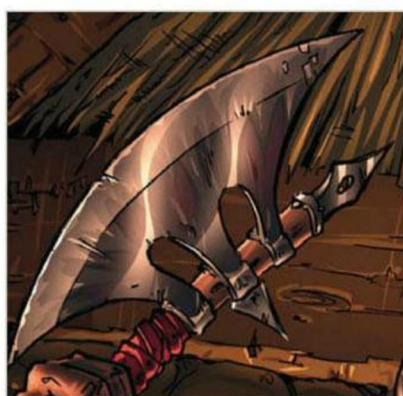
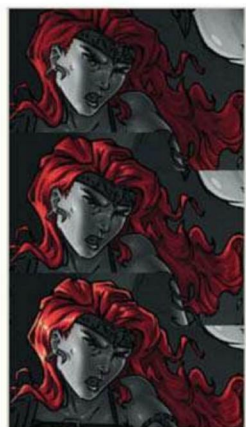
Tutorial

Action-packed combat scenes



15 Fur, hair and leather

Fur, hair and leather can have similar rendering styles. We want to use smaller, brighter highlights and allow for more of the dark tones to stand out. Tweak the hair base colour to R:53, G:24, B:24 and brush on R:212, G:27, B:27. Now apply a smaller highlight with more orange. The red leather and dark leather have the same base but the red leather uses the hair highlight colours while the fur and dark leather are brushed with peach.



16 Render the blade Painting metal requires high contrast, more tightly defined highlights and reflections to make it look realistic and leap off the page. Pick a less saturated peach tone and loosely brush in some highlight streaks across the steel weapons. Now cut in smaller and tighter highlights with the same colour. Paint a touch of the surrounding red into the metal.



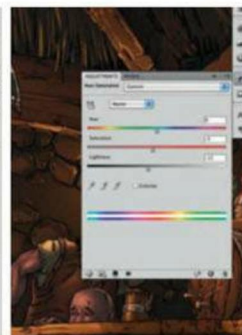
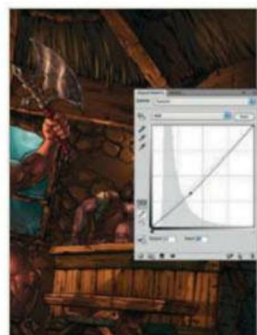
17 Fire highlights After painting the fire with rough, sharply overlapping highlights, make three new layers above Line Art. Set them to Screen mode and name them Glow Fire, Glow Lantern and Bloom FX. On the Glow Fire layer, brush over the flame with a bright orange tone, then do the same for the lantern on its layer. For the Bloom FX, follow the lit edge of the main characters and brush on a similar bright orange using a smaller brush. The layer opacity can be adjusted if you like to keep the effect from being overpowering.



18 Block the flames Lasso a selection around the woman, being careful not to pick up any of the background. Shift+Opt/Alt+Cmd/Ctrl-click on the Line Art layer thumbnail. On the Flats layer, grab the Magic Wand and click on each of her tones until she is 100% selected. Invert this selection, jump to the Glow Fire layer and click the layer mask icon in the Layers palette. Brush in a little more light from the fireplace, pulling it out behind her.



19 Clean your weapons Grab the Lasso and follow the form of the barbarian and the window frame where the moonlight hits. Brush a bright blue-green with a lower saturation. We don't want this colour to be too vibrant. Now we'll colour some of the line art so, on the Line Art layer, lock the transparency. Lasso select the lines for the skin and paint specific areas or fill the entire selection. Colour the lines of the flames, the splash of ale and the fur, and paint some of the metal lines.



20 Self critique Step back and take a wider look at your work, zooming out to actual size. Most pieces need some adjustments at this stage. Create a Curves adjustment layer to enrich the tones throughout the image, and make the roof and background walls a little darker too. You can even make more dramatic changes, such as altering the shape of a face or a barbarian's posture slightly with the Transform tools.

Style School
Art genres in a nutshell

Masters of colour

Learn the benefits of a limited palette

Limiting the background palette is often used in comics art today, but it has long been a staple of image makers who were looking to evoke action by giving their images a strong focus. Bright colours, contrast and extreme compositions draw attention directly to the main action on the page. By implementing this vivid colour scheme entrapped by diagonal compositional lines of contrasting value, an artist may enhance the depiction of combat in their paintings. We look at two examples from art history where the tones and background details were employed to just this effect.



Artist: **Shang Xi**
Title: **Guan Yu Captures General Pang De**
Date: **c1430**
Location/Owner: **Palace Museum, Beijing**

● Excitement of colour, more than the use of light or motion, evokes a sense of action in this painting by Shang Xi. The use of red near the overly-large protagonists draws attention to the struggling general as the bold use of blue-green immediately grabs your eye. The limited palette of the background allows the colours to pop, adding to the excitement. tinyurl.com/da-shang-xi



Artist: **Eugène Delacroix**
Title: **Gladiators in the Colosseum**
Date: **c1863**
Location/Owner: **Private collection**

● Delacroix's depiction of combat may appear more subtle upon first glance, but his careful use of shadow suggests tension and fear. The sun's cast shadow forms a diagonal, directing you through the action and into the darkness of the attacking cats. tinyurl.com/da-delacroix



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Design original robot mechs

Israel A Carrion paints a sci-fi mech illustration, taking inspiration from classic Western movies

Tex Mechs

Photoshop



The first thing I always ask myself when creating a sci-fi illustration is how I can make this stand out from the other work that's out there. Mixing two themes is a great way to create something familiar but unique at the same time. For this sci-fi illustration I'm going to add robot mechs to the Wild West. Both of these genres are popular at the moment and both have strong good-versus-evil narratives.

When I think about Western movies, the classic scene where the good and the bad (and occasionally the ugly) face each other before they pull out their guns comes to mind, with plenty of tension and expectation. But another inspiration for this piece comes from the classic sci-fi scenes of giant robots fighting or a huge creature attacking a city – think of *Transformers*, *Godzilla* or *Thor* versus *The Destroyer*.

I have three main elements then; the hero, the villain and the town where the action takes place. First I paint thumbnails in Photoshop to explore different compositions. During the development process, my hero goes from a human or a cyborg to another big mech controlled by a human inside, and the enemy appears in different sizes, too, although I notice the bigger version is the more intimidating. There are different possible moments of action and storyline here. Did the attack over the town start first, so we can see people running away? Or are the two robots fighting and the town's just unlucky enough to be in their way? I prefer a deserted street anticipating the action as this creates more tension so the viewer can imagine what is going to happen later.

Once I know what I want for the illustration I start the research for the mechs. I know I don't want anything too stylised with curves or organic shapes, as I want to keep them a big mass of metal with straight shapes and old, rough textures. To understand the



Composition studies are sometimes drawn as just linework, but I find that using values makes them easier to read. I only spend a few minutes on each, just enough to explore different compositions.

functional part of the robots, it is very important to look at the real world. Segmented insects or other animals can provide great references for the way robots and imagined machines might move. A spider excavator, for example, is a fantastic reference. I also take a look at the book *Mechanika* by Doug Chiang, one of my favourites for this subject.

Looking at how other designers solved problems like joints and weapon integration is useful as well. Classic Japanese mechs are a big inspiration, but they



I draw some mech sketches, giving them a Western look, sometimes even pursuing a direction I didn't have in mind initially just for fun and to see if it might work in the piece.

ISRAEL A CARRION

Artist info



www.isrartistic.com

"I live in Barcelona but frequently work for companies in other countries, specialising as a concept artist for the entertainment industry or as an illustrator telling stories through my work."



WORKING PROGRESS



Sketch thumbnails of the scene



Perfect weaponry



Build the environment

“ Be open to changes in your work so if there is something wrong or something you don’t like you can just redo it ”

● This is the sketch with values, just before I start adding colours. This gives the structure and distribution of tones.

Artist showCase



Living Statues, Fighting Statues

2012, Photoshop

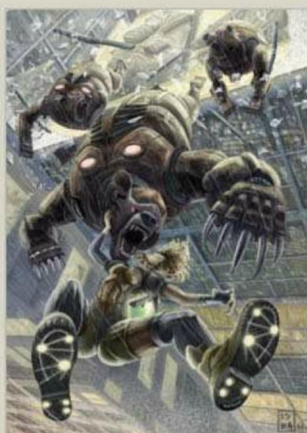
An illustration for a Crimdon Daggers challenge with 'living statues' as the theme. I love the statues you find in Asian temples so I painted a little fantasy story with the main creature being a hybrid inspired by these.



City Attack

2012, Photoshop

This environment design was painted for a course instructed by James Paick. Sci-fi is one of my favourite subjects and adding some storytelling with the huge creature made it more fun.



Goldilocks

2011, Photoshop

I made my own version of the tale of the three bears set in the future with robot bears and an adult Goldilocks. This painting is going to be included in an art book featuring Spanish artists.

have a very unique style so I also look at mechs from the West to make sure my image has a unique twist.

For the final illustration I start the sketch by looking at my favourite composition thumbnails. To add more dynamism, my composition has a rotated horizon so the verticals are rotated too. I keep the grid on a layer to check it if necessary and I even rotate the image to bring it back to horizontal if I find the angle of my composition too awkward to draw something correctly or in a way that's comfortable. I then quickly add some more values at this stage too.

For the hero design I go with a light body, humanoid on top but with an animal aspect to the legs to make it more interesting and robotic. I add the holster for the gun on the right leg. For the head I draw a shape to remind the viewer of a cowboy hat. I place its legs on either side of some houses to give a sense of proportion and scale. Showing a mech alongside humans and human-sized structures instantly shows the viewer how big it is.

The design of the enemy is harder; it has more prominence so it must be even more visually interesting and lead the viewer's eye up to his head. At first I think a robot with a scorpion look would be cool, to represent the desert and totally contrast with the hero, using a big cannon on the tail to shoot. But the sketch doesn't convince me so I go for a four-legged, two-armed robot holding a giant Gatling gun.

I start colouring the background on a new layer. To emphasise the drama I set the scene just before sunset with the warm colours of twilight, really bringing out the Wild West landscape. Monument Valley in Colorado is a good reference for this. The colour variation in the sky is challenging, but I can use a very common custom brush to paint in the clouds. I add a big moon to give a sci-fi look.

I can now add the main colours to the rest of the piece with Color or Overlay layers, then continue painting on normal layers. I paint with a Charcoal, a Chalk and a ragged custom brush 90 per cent of the time. The Size Jitter is set to Pen Pressure for the Charcoal variant, but for the other two it's set to



Opacity Jitter. I use 10-20 layers and frequently merge them as this keeps my workflow organised and also keeps the file size down, but complex pieces like this can require me to use quite a lot at one time.

I paint the mech in the foreground mainly with red and add some colour variation with warm hues keeping the values dark to give it impact. For the town environment, first I paint the basic shapes of the buildings and then add some textures of wood on Overlay layers and desaturate them if necessary. Then I add another one for the road. Make sure the textures match the perspective by using the Transform tool to warp them into place. The design of the town is fairly standardised, based on my research of real Western towns, to avoid distracting the viewer from the two mechs. The cast shadows and the values over the walls are very important here to get the mood of the piece right.



● Check your values. To give a greater sense of depth, mood and scale, the giant robot needs to be lighter. Use the Navigator and a Saturation layer filled with black for this.

Create metallic effects

Paint realistic surfaces



I want my mechs to look worn out as if they were built from scraps of old metal found in the desert long ago. If you don't feel comfortable painting a specific surface, you can make studies from the real world. I paint with dirt and rust brushes in desaturated colours on an Overlay layer. The metal should shine where the light hits, so I paint on a Color Dodge, Overlay or a Curves adjustment layer. I use a soft brush for large areas and a hard brush for tiny highlights. I paint some scratches on a Normal layer and add the last details.





I keep adapting the big villain robot, looking for a bigger and more dynamic design. It's always good to be flexible.



To add more depth, I paint in fog or smoke (with a cloud brush or soft brush) between the objects in the distance.



The shotgun on the left shoulder emphasises the vertical lines in my composition, but I lighten the values so I don't distract the viewer with such a strong shape.

MAKE IT WORK

In order to understand how to build a robot and make it functional, it's good to think in the most basic shapes – cubes, cylinders and spheres. Once it works you can add designs to those shapes. Action figures or model kits can be helpful, too, to understand how they are articulated.

Then I work on the giant mech. The process here is similar to the hero's mech, but this design is more complex. As I work it up I add some fog and use lighter values to give a sense of depth. The light source is on the right of the scene so, with Overlay and Color Dodge layers, I highlight the right side of the mechs, especially the faces, arms and weapons, because those are the focal points. After a break to refresh my eyes, I notice the big robot's silhouette is not interesting enough. It's too static, so I start thinking logically about it and how I can improve him. He is holding a huge Gatling gun that looks hard to reload once it is out of ammo, so what will he do with such a big, useless thing? It's good to be open to changes in your work so if there is something wrong or something you don't like you can just redo it!

I draw a new sketch over the big robot, change the pose to give it a more interesting silhouette and integrate the Gatling onto the arm, which is a common design in sci-fi pieces, but works better. With the right arm I balance the contrast for the heavy weapon, and now the four legs are more visible. One of the reasons I failed with the previous version is because I was too concerned with the strict perspective. Now I try to be more flexible and go with what looks best. I pick the colours from the previous mech and keep painting with my three most-used brushes on just a couple of layers.

I add textures to both mechs using custom brushes I have created for dirt and rust. For me the best way to do this is to paint sporadically here and there without fear on a new Overlay layer, then add a mask, invert it and paint with my Charcoal brush on the areas where I want the texture to be added.

To finish the design of the mechs, I add a few more elements to give a sense of scale and detail, like labels and stickers on a new Overlay layer. It is important to keep the worn-out look to tie in with the overall theme and really nail the concept.

With the design finished, I work on the sense of depth and atmosphere. I make a Levels adjustment on the big robot to lower the contrast, add more fog between the different elements on the sky and the road and add a few more highlights with a Curves adjustment and a Color Dodge layer.

Develop the body

How to render the larger mech, from sketch to detailing



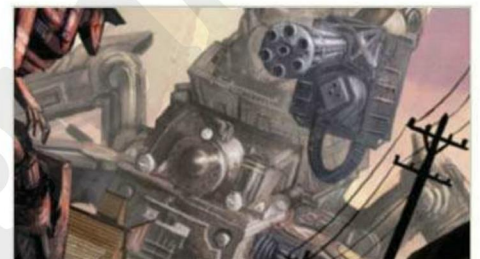
01 Rough sketch First I draw a rough sketch to define the basic lines of the robot. If I have problems drawing in this perspective I rotate the image.



02 Block colours I paint the very basic shapes over the lines; it gives a 3D aspect when working with cubes. I clean the contours and erase outlines.



03 Add details In this sketch I use lines again to draw the new shapes and start adding design elements. It is exactly the same process for the gun.



04 Push the design I look at old locomotives and include iconic elements like the cylindrical shape and the lights. I add the cables to create scale.

Paint a space scene

John Malcolm shows how to take advantage of 3D when creating complex structures

Attack on Cloud Station 7

Blender, Painter



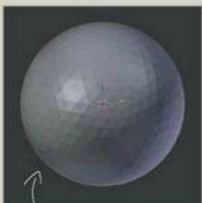
There are certain subjects, such as architecture, that cry out for help from a 3D program. This is especially true with sci-fi where a 3D render can lend a necessary air of believability. Enter Blender – an excellent, well-supported and constantly updated 3D program that's totally free! You can download it from www.blender.org.

3D programs like Blender and Google's SketchUp provide a free, quick and effective way to make the hard stuff easy. As well as making it simple to create complex-looking structures like our atmospheric domes, Blender also enables users to have multiple copies of one object and keep them all accurate. An example of this would be the attacking wasp ships in this scene. Breaking and damaging stuff is also simpler working with models; if you know how something is put together it makes it a lot easier to rip it to bits.

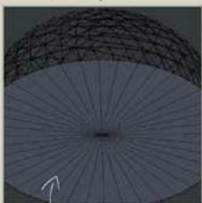
There are a couple of basic Blender operations that get used constantly while modelling and they will become second nature after a short while. Ctrl/right-click selects an object (in Object mode) or an element such as a face, vertex or edge (in Edit mode). The Tab key jumps you between Object and Edit modes while the G key stands for grab (and means move), R rotates and S scales. Cmd/Ctrl+Tab selects faces, vertices or edges. Click and hold the middle mouse button to rotate, add Shift to pan and scroll the mouse wheel to control zoom.

This tutorial covers the basic steps of creating assets in Blender before moving into Painter to complete a dynamic sci-fi scene. There are some additional JPEGs supplied along with an assets pack which will show some of the elements in greater detail and help you learn the working process.

WORKING PROGRESS



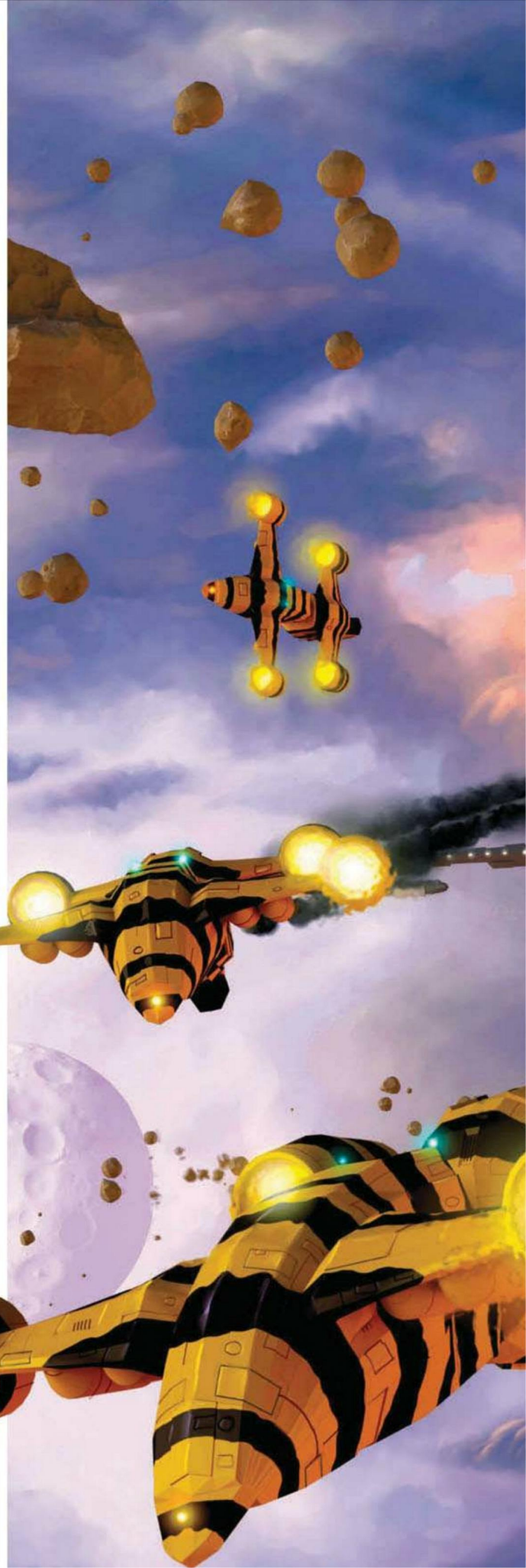
Step 01, Begin in Blender



Step 06, Create the floor



Step 12, Finish the model



**JOHN
MALCOLM**

Artist info

johnmalcolm1970.co.uk

Although now working for a local newspaper group, John has found his free time increasingly being taken up with digital art. He is happiest painting things from scratch, using Painter 12, but he also likes to play around with Blender.



Design the station

Let Blender do the hard work

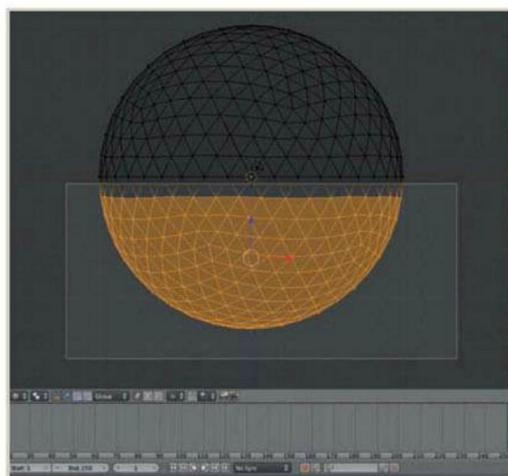
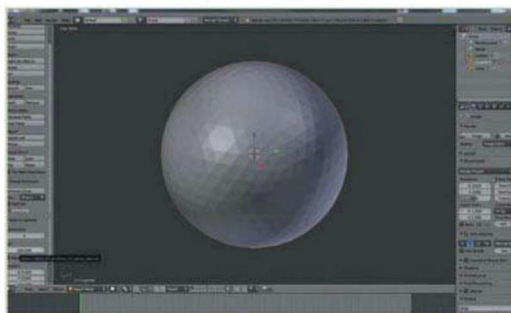
01 Adjust settings

Go to File>User Preferences. In the Interface tab, check Zoom to Mouse Position, Rotate Around Selection and Prompt Quit. In the Addons tab turn on Dynamic Spacebar, Inset Polygon and LoopTools. Go System>VBOs and set the Compute Device to CUDA.



02 Begin in Blender

Ctrl/right-click the default cube and hit X to delete it. Press Shift+A and choose Mesh>Icosphere. At the bottom left of the screen some options should appear. Increase the Icosphere's Subdivisions to 4 and its Size to 100. Hit the decimal point key on your keyboard's number pad to view the whole sphere and then press 5 on it to switch the view from Perspective to Orthogonal.

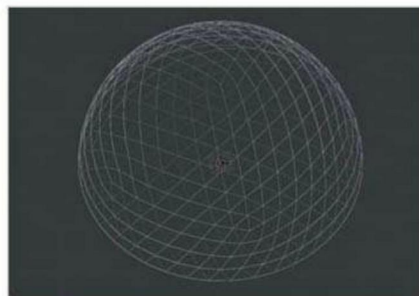
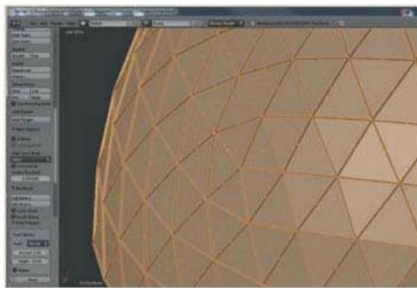


03 Sphere to dome

Press 1 on the number pad to jump to Front view. If it doesn't say Front Ortho at the top left of the screen, hit 5. Change to Edit mode and hit A to deselect all. Hit Z to switch to Wireframe view, B for Box Select, then click and drag around the bottom half of the sphere. Hit X and select Delete Vertices before pressing Z again.

04 The framework

Rename the sphere in the Outliner (top right) City Dome. Hit Cmd/Ctrl+Tab, choose Face Select mode and press A to select them all. Near the bottom of the toolbar on the left is the Inset Polygon button. Click it, then from the options that appear on the bottom left untick Region, change the Height to -10 and leave the other settings at their default values.

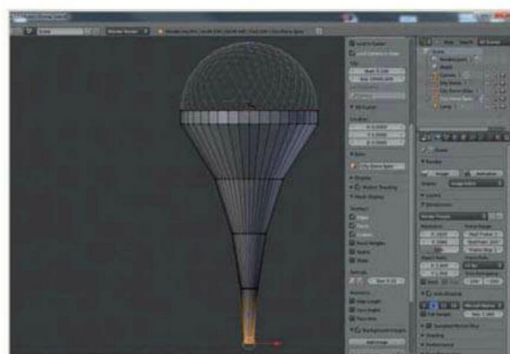
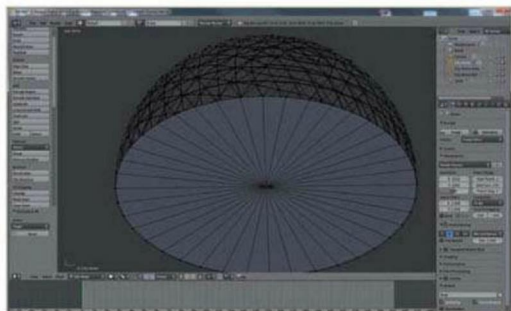


05 Render glass

Hit A again and ensure that nothing is selected. Look for the Select menu at the bottom of the 3D view and then navigate to Select>Triangles. With those selected, hit P to separate them and choose Selection. We now have two objects, the framework and the glass panels. Rename the second object in the Outliner and press H to hide it for your view for now.

06 Create the floor

Opt/Alt+Ctrl/right-click to select the circle at the bottom of the dome. Shift+D to duplicate it, then Ctrl/right-click to leave the duplicate in place. Press P, choose Separate by Selection and select the original circle again. Press E to extrude and Ctrl/right-click to leave it in place. Hit S to scale towards the middle and click and then press Opt/Alt+M and choose the At Center option.



07 Add in the spire

Tab out to Object mode and select the duplicated circle left over from the previous step. Rename it City Dome Spire and then change to Edit mode. Press E to extrude, Z to constrain to up and down only, type -20 and hit the Enter key. Press S to scale, type in 0.5 and hit Enter. Repeat this step to form the spire shape.

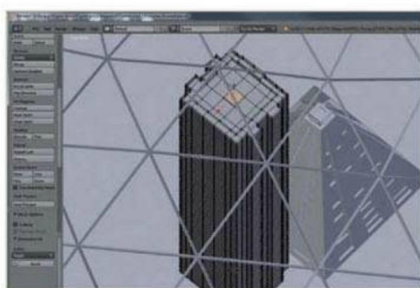


08 Loop cuts

To add more geometry press Cmd/Ctrl+R and hover the cursor over the spire until a magenta ring appears. Use the mouse wheel to increase the number of cuts (or intersections) in this loop shape and hit Enter to create them. Repeat this over the whole spire. Now select a face or two and use E to project panels and protruding ledges.

BLENDER COOKIE

Blender Cookie is a website that's ideal for learning more about 3D modelling with Blender. It offers a huge variety of free tutorials, covering all aspects of Blender and ranging from an absolute beginner's level right up to advanced. It also offers membership that includes some exclusive content: cgcookie.com/blender.

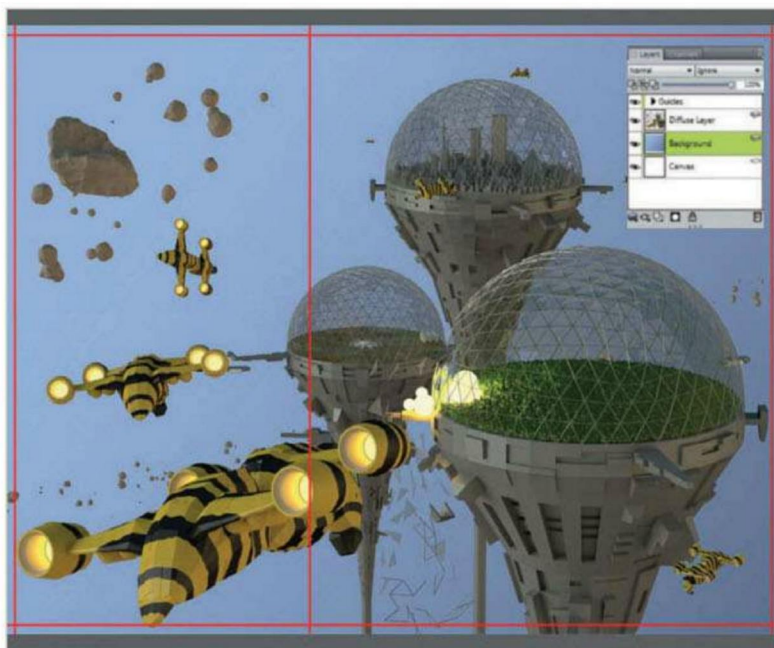
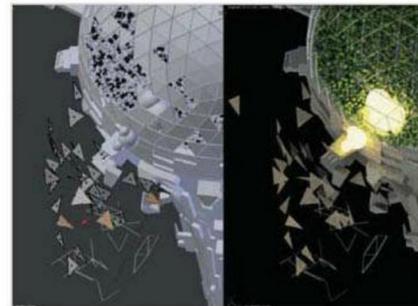


09 Form a skyscraper In Object mode press Cmd/Ctrl+A then navigate to Mesh>Cube. In the Properties panel, change the dimensions to 10, 10, 50. This creates a 500-metre building at the 1-Blender-unit-equals-10-metres scale. Add loop cuts using Cmd/Ctrl+R, then hit E to extrude them and form a shape. Make all the building blocks then duplicate using Opt/Alt+D.

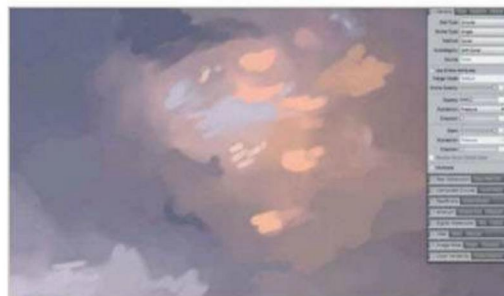
10 Duplicate structures Use Shift to select the three objects making up the dome: the structure, the dome glass and the spire. Hit Shift+D twice to create two duplicates. Rename these in the Outliner as Farm and Forest. Move the Sun Lamp and do a preview render by changing the Viewport from Solid to Rendered.



11 Break it down Create some simple trees, give them an appropriate colour and then add several spheres with an Emission shader to stand in for explosions. With the dome structure in Edit mode, use the Lasso tool (Cmd/Ctrl-click) to select some parts of the structure. Press P to separate these, then move and Rotate the sections.



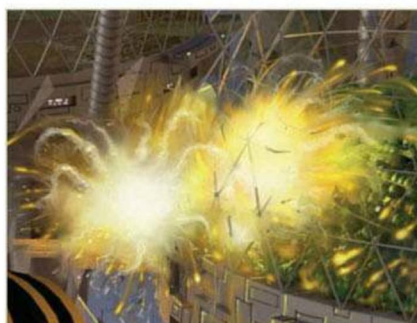
12 Finish the model Continue to build and add more elements using the same methods as before. There are additional JPEG images supplied with the tutorial files that detail these further. Set up your render, making sure Transparency is ticked in the Film section of the Render tab, then take your model into Painter to start the really fun stuff.



13 Apply alien clouds Instead of being in space, we want the domes to appear high up in the clouds of an alien world. Block in some sky and cloud shapes using a cool palette of colours before adding some splashes of warmth. Now it's time for another sort of Blender – Just Add Water – used in small circular strokes to blend and pull out wispy bits of cloud.



14 Bring detail On a new layer above the clouds background and render, use the Real 2B Pencil tool sampled from darks and lights within the image. Jump between freehand brushstrokes (B) and straight lines (V) to add more detail in the form of panels, recesses and lights.



15 Finish with a bang With Painter's FX>Glow variant set to an orange colour, slowly start working on the explosion area. Use a light touch and enable the strokes to build up slowly from orange into yellow and finally to bright white. Now use the same brush variant to add a bit of glow to the lights in the scene as well as the ship engines.

BLENDER ARTISTS

Blender Artists is a forum for those working with Blender. It's a great place to find out about all the latest developments as well as seeing some awesome artwork and works in progress. If you find yourself stuck, it's a great place to get some help, advice or ideas: www.blenderartists.org.

Create a sci-fi colour palette



Joe Cummings discovers how a gamut mask can help you choose the right colours for your painting

No Way Out

Sketch Book Pro, Painter



Digital artists have an embarrassment of riches when it comes to painting tools and colour palettes. The simplest painting programs are more than adequately equipped while the big hitters such as Photoshop and Painter have such depth that you are unlikely to use everything on offer in one lifetime. It's tempting to try to use as many tools as you can in each painting, but this is nearly always a bad idea. Limiting your choices beforehand can help to achieve a more harmonious result.

Millions of colours are available for selection from the application's colour wheel. A traditional painter will mix his palette from a handful of tubes, but for us the whole range – or gamut – is available with just a couple of clicks. This can be daunting when deciding which colours to use. It's helpful, therefore, to deliberately narrow your choice by applying a gamut mask to your colour wheel.

This may sound complicated but it simply means covering up portions of the wheel. A piece of card with a hole in it placed on top of a colour wheel (or the on-screen equivalent) will do the job. The hole can be moved around to find an area of harmonious colour that suits the mood of your painting. For this tutorial we chose a range of analogous (adjacent) colours including blue, blue-greens and dark magenta. To add a strong complementary colour, you can use the opposite side of the wheel, so the mask reveals two small areas – one for the main colours and a smaller area opposite from which you can pick the complementary hues. An excellent online gamut mask tool can be found at www.livepaintinglessons.com/gamutmask.php.

JOE CUMMINGS

Artist info



www.cummingsillustration.com

I have been a long-time traditional illustrator, producing artwork for magazines and newspapers. I like to explore many different styles and media. I love how the abundance of digital drawing programs and 3D applications offers many more avenues for exploration.

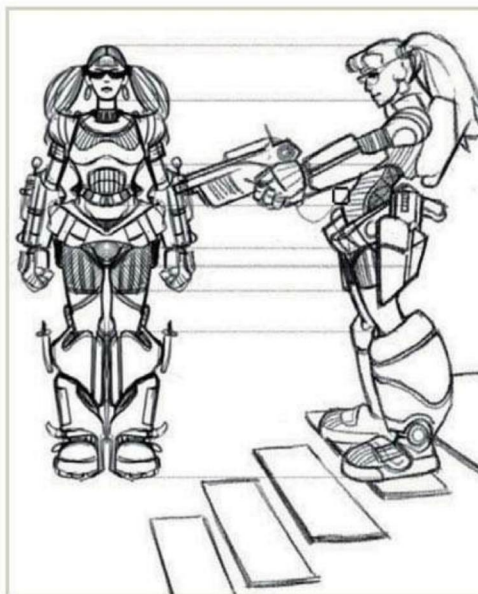
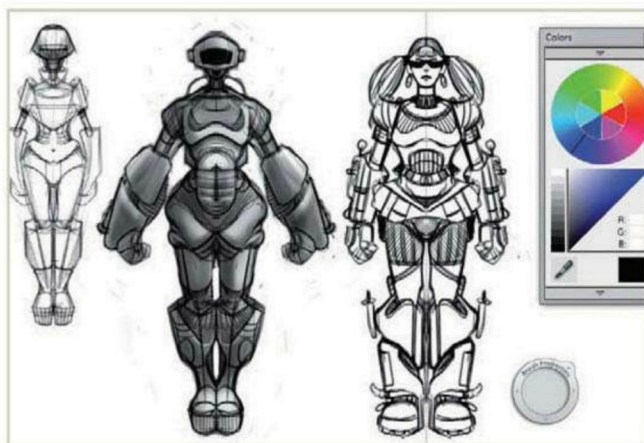




Colour harmony

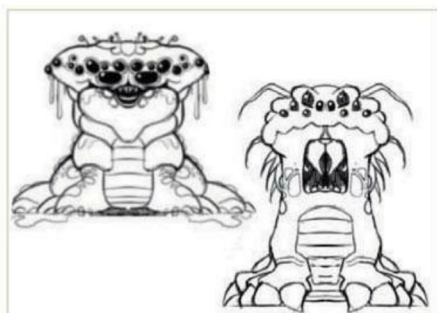
Choosing colours to suit your mood has never been easier

01 Symmetrical thumbnails This is a sci-fi-inspired image of a slightly cartoony armed heroine facing numerous dangers as she tries to escape a gloomy corridor. Open SketchBook Pro and, with the Symmetry function enabled, experiment by sketching the main character. The symmetry mode is ideal for quickly creating shapes and details.

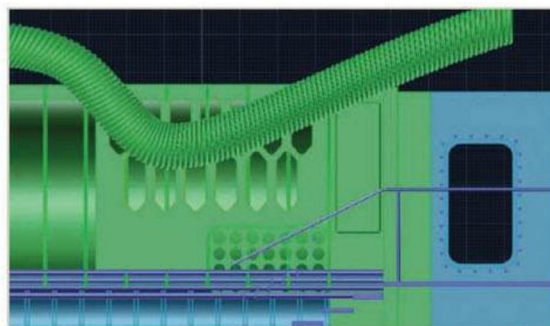


02 Making projections

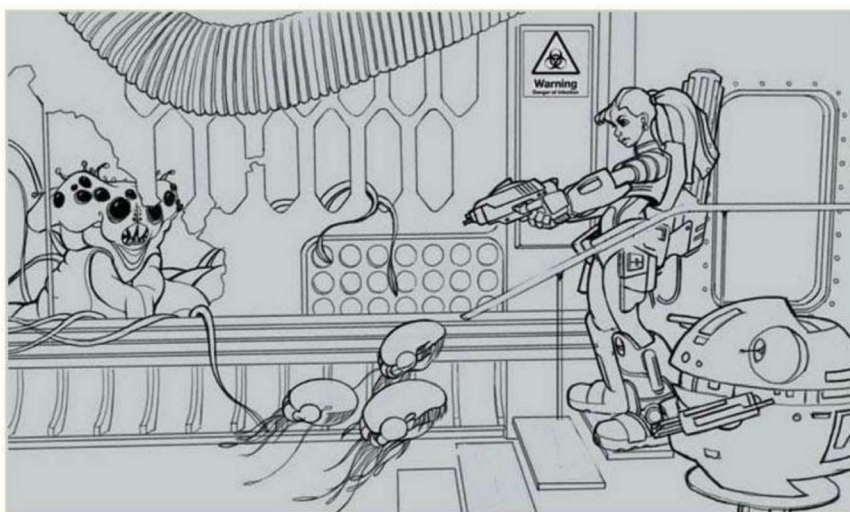
Using simple projection lines it's relatively easy to establish where limb joints and armour detail are situated in a more natural pose for the character. Don't add too much detail to the line drawing at this point because it is far easier doing this when working in tone.



04 Moment of Inspiration Moment of Inspiration (Mol) is a modelling program, similar in many ways to SketchUp, and both can be used to create a basic model of the background for the illustration. Many illustrators used to build small maquettes out of clay and paper to help them with perspective and lighting, but these programs are ideal for mimicking this process.



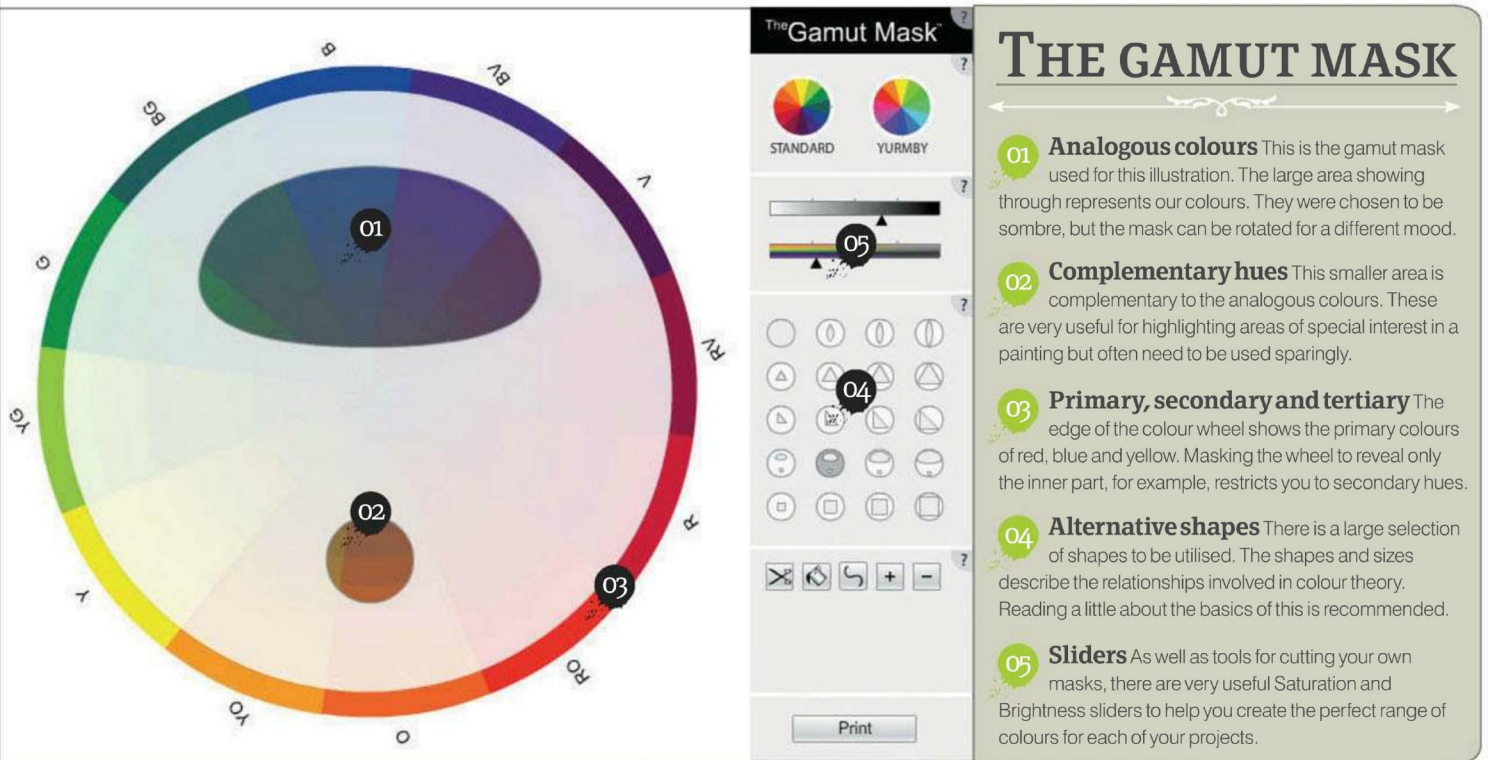
03 Monster sketch The individual characters and monsters can be easily rendered in SketchBook Pro. Podgy slime monsters such as these can even be roughly modelled in a 3D program such as ZBrush or Sculptis to obtain extra reference. This illustration is not aiming for hyperrealism, so a sketch is sufficient for now.



THEMATIC UNITY

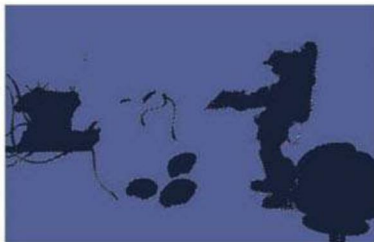
To create a sense of unity in the scene, render small details to draw the piece together. The warning sign implies danger and ties in with the radioactive colours of the monster, while the LEDs on the bot mirror the trip lasers.

05 Assemble elements All of the elements were assembled together in Photoshop and a line drawing of the scene was created and cleaned up. The drawing was placed on its own layer, which was then changed to the Multiply mode, ready for adding colour below.

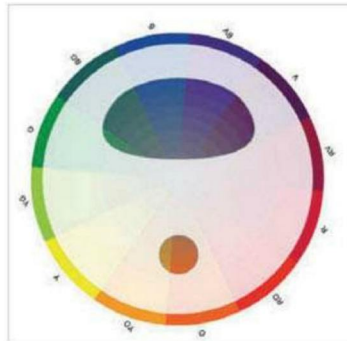


THE GAMUT MASK

- 01 Analogous colours** This is the gamut mask used for this illustration. The large area showing through represents our colours. They were chosen to be sombre, but the mask can be rotated for a different mood.
- 02 Complementary hues** This smaller area is complementary to the analogous colours. These are very useful for highlighting areas of special interest in a painting but often need to be used sparingly.
- 03 Primary, secondary and tertiary** The edge of the colour wheel shows the primary colours of red, blue and yellow. Masking the wheel to reveal only the inner part, for example, restricts you to secondary hues.
- 04 Alternative shapes** There is a large selection of shapes to be utilised. The shapes and sizes describe the relationships involved in colour theory. Reading a little about the basics of this is recommended.
- 05 Sliders** As well as tools for cutting your own masks, there are very useful Saturation and Brightness sliders to help you create the perfect range of colours for each of your projects.



- 06 Isolate the characters** Before painting the background, isolate the main characters by filling their shapes with a flat colour. This enables you to easily place them on a new layer so you can paint them without worrying about spilling into the background.



- 07 Gamut mask** This is where we introduce the gamut mask. We want the main colours to reflect a sombre, metallic environment, so choose a range of blue-greys and greens. With the large hole placed over this range, the smaller hole will lie over a small selection of complementary colours. These can be used for highlights such as the bright light shining through the doorway.



- 08 Lasso and fill** On the background layer, block in the colours for your environment and then, on a separate layer above, the characters. Make large selections with the Lasso and apply fills and gradients. Now place an image of the gamut mask on another layer for easy selection. I find Photoshop best for this early stage.



- 09 Light detail** Work in Painter now and round out your heroine character. The strong light source of the doorway and the weak secondary source from the front enable you to create detail with highlights and rim lights.



- 10 Respect restrictions** The little critters needed to stand out from the background but remain within the gamut, so use a slightly greener blue. Don't be tempted to break away from your chosen gamut to add a bit of colour contrast – staying strictly within your colour choice is important for the unity of the piece.

Tutorial Create a sci-fi colour palette



11 Biological textures The slime monster is rendered in a warmer green, right on the edge of the colour range. Painter's papers are great to add texture, so try the Underwater Vision preset from the Biological Textures category for a mottled skin effect. Paint it on a Multiply layer, adjusting the size of the texture to suit the body parts.



12 Fine dots and floors Use papers again to render some steel mesh flooring – try inverting the Fine Dots option. Paint a large area on a new layer with some Blunt Hard Chalk, Grain set to 12, and then use Transform (Cmd/Ctrl+Opt/Alt+T) to adjust the perspective. Select Preserve Transparency and darken or lighten areas with the soft airbrush.



13 Greebles Superimpose a wireframed sphere over the gun droid to help with the drawing of some greebles (laser details). A few of the colourful lights are outside of the gamut but they are only small and add a nice level of detail. The main purpose here is to be as imaginative as possible designing creatures and robots.



14 Big guns It is much easier adding detail at this stage than when drawing your line art. Our heroine is young but tough and sports unfeasibly large weapons. At this stage, render her shooter with a fine pencil and soft airbrush. Her pose has been changed for more dynamism.



15 Maintaining harmony Maintaining the restrictions set by the gamut mask, add some light steam or smoke rising from beneath the floor. We can see that the whole image is kept harmonious if we stick to our rule. The smoke looks unnatural on a white background but works within the scene.



16 Yellow equals green The warning sign is yellow but this is a dark basement without a strong direct light source. Referring back to our gamut mask, the nearest colour is a grey-green and, sure enough, this colour gives a reasonable impression of yellow in shadow. It won't always be perfect but it's good practice to continually check.



17 Create mist What is a sci-fi scene without a little mist on the ground? This was added both below and above the character layer. The mist nearer us is flat and faint, while the clouds further away are more linear and ribbon like.



KEY TECHNIQUES

01 Warm light In this image the heroine has to make her escape past the horrors in front of her. The light from the doorway lets us know where she has come from, a warm, welcoming light, in contrast to the grey gloom that awaits.

02 Good composition The character stands on a compositional sweet spot. The dark magenta of her face and legs were picked from the gamut mask to help make her stand out, along with the all-important rim lighting.

03 Slimy The slime monster is the exception to the rule in this image as his main colour is slightly outside the gamut mask. It is a little too warm to be strictly within our palette, but the overall mix of colours allows it to work.

04 Cover up Sometimes, due to time pressures, shortcuts have to be taken, so try covering up something with less detail like the steel mesh by overlaying the mist. You still get the suggestion of the texture without hours of painting.

05 Neutral walls The background wall occupies most of the painting and should be relatively neutral to leave room for warmer foreground colours. On the gamut mask these colours are found near the centre of the wheel.



18 Scratched metal With most of the painting finished, introduce some textures. Scratched metal is perfect here, so source one from Painter's presets (or a download site) and place on an overlay layer with a Transparency of 13%. It is quite prominent, which is not always a good thing but works in this image. The same texture works nicely on the little critters, too.

19 Laser light All of the complementary colours are situated to the right of the image, so now introduce a hint of red on the left side. Use a 2B Pencil brush in Painter with Straight Lines enabled (V) to draw some laser trip beams. Duplicate the layer and blur the bottom one slightly.



20 Final touches The final touch is to make sure all of the light coming from the doorway was being reflected from nearby surfaces. Add some glowing plasma beneath the droid and then, taking it into Photoshop, check the levels, saturation and colour balance.

Tutorial

Build colour, light and detail



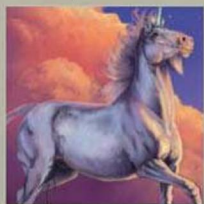
WORKING PROGRESS



Step 01, Create a sketch



Step 09, Base coat



Step 13, Face hues

Learn to build colour, light and detail

Amber Hill explores the iconography of unicorns to create a magical piece

Always

Painter



There is something timeless about the unicorn (despite its rocking prevalence in the Eighties). Along with dragons, it is one of the poster children of fantasy, probably because it is one of the first we were introduced to when we were young. The world of the unicorn is the world of imagination and play, of innocence and beginnings, of nostalgia and humour. In legend, unicorns could only be tamed by a maiden; someone as pure as its white coat.

AMBER HILL

Artist info



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Amber's art education consists of dissecting dead things and watching live ones. She specialises in fantasy wildlife art – flights of the imagination inspired by the living and breathing world. Amber lives on the road, moving from place to place in pursuit of newness and wonder.

There are many kinds of unicorns from around the world and the unicorn's image has evolved through the ages. The original European unicorn was very goat-like with dainty legs, cloven hooves, a beard, a lion's mane and a curly coat. Today they are often depicted as strong stallions with enormous manes while occasionally retaining traits from their previous incarnations. A few extra curls around the mane and fetlocks (the heels of the hooves) can easily transform a simple white horse into a more unicorn-like creature. Of course the one thing that ties all unicorns together is their magnificent spiral horn. These horns are legendary for their healing properties as well as fearsome weapons in battle.

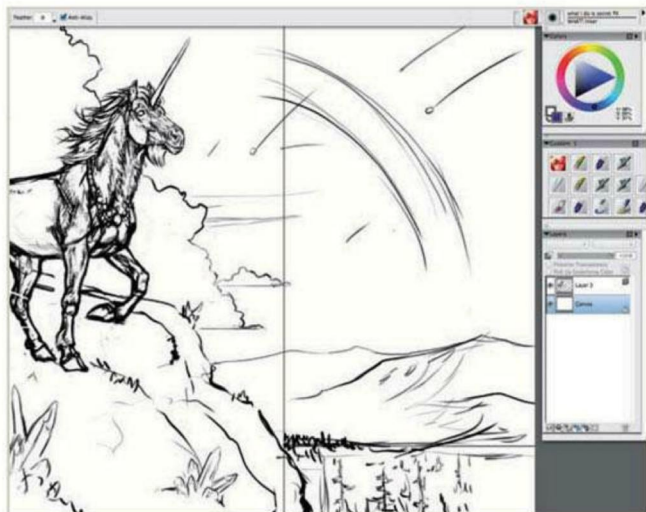
Horse anatomy can be difficult because, just as with humans, many people are so familiar with them that they know instantly when there is something that looks wrong. A horse's anatomy shows very well through its short coat and they are very expressive animals. Be careful, as initial sketches aiming at the unicorn's delicacy and otherworldly beauty can end up looking like a slightly grumpy horse! Don't let this deter you as, while it's vital to strive for solid anatomy, the fantasy aspect gives you some artistic licence. Don't forget these beasts have other animal traits in them. Let the goat show if you want, or add more lion. Here we've gone for a modern unicorn who appears to be calling upon the heavens to put on a glorious show of atmospheric optics – and they've obliged.





Make believe

Delve into the world of the unicorn



01 Create a sketch Begin by jotting down several ideas. This is fantasy so don't be afraid to go over the top with hearts, stars and rainbows – you can always reassess it later. Here we have a very horsey unicorn trotting along a ridge above an enchanted forest. Start drawing on a new layer set to Multiply.

02 Sky base We want to paint an outrageously beautiful sunset to match the dashing unicorn, so use the Paint Bucket to dump a lilac colour onto the canvas. Select the Soft Airbrush set to 10% Opacity and brush in a sky gradient. Paint deep blue on top and paler blue and pink closer to the horizon.

03 Begin the clouds Use the Just Add Water tool to blend the sky gradient together. Don't worry about making it perfectly smooth, as streaks can emulate high-altitude clouds. Work with the Oil Pastel tool at 100% Grain, too, as its triangular shape is perfect for painting large cumulonimbus clouds. Choose a pink colour as the cloud base and use soft, circular motions with the brush.



04 Juicy colours Painting clouds is like painting a lumpy gradient. These clouds have a dark base, swollen with rain, with colours a bit like a reverse sunset. Use reference photos and pay attention to the negative and positive shapes of value masses. Paint the side lit by the sun, but don't forget the opposite side that reflects the pale purple sky.

05 Plant grasses Use the Round Oil Pastel tool to blob in the underpainting for the grass and cliff. Like many difficult textures, start big and get smaller. Paint grass that is closer to the viewer with vertical strokes, and the grass that won't be as detailed with horizontal strokes. Choose warm yellow, greens and golds for the lighting.



ORDINARY TO EXTRAORDINARY

Once your imagination has sparked, seek out references to aid in creating your fantasy creature. There are many free stock images online for artists, especially on deviantART and Flickr. For example, this unicorn was based on free photos from the great selections at lumibear.deviantart.com and bellemisty.deviantart.com. The background was inspired by many Flickr photos of sunsets, as well as my own file of horse and cloud photos.

06 Break it down Detail the grass by laying in dark greens in choppy V shapes. Vary your strokes so not all of the stems face the same way and space them out sporadically. Paint lighter green over that, and then still-lighter green over that. Go back and add random darker strokes to add depth and cream seed stems for a touch of realism.

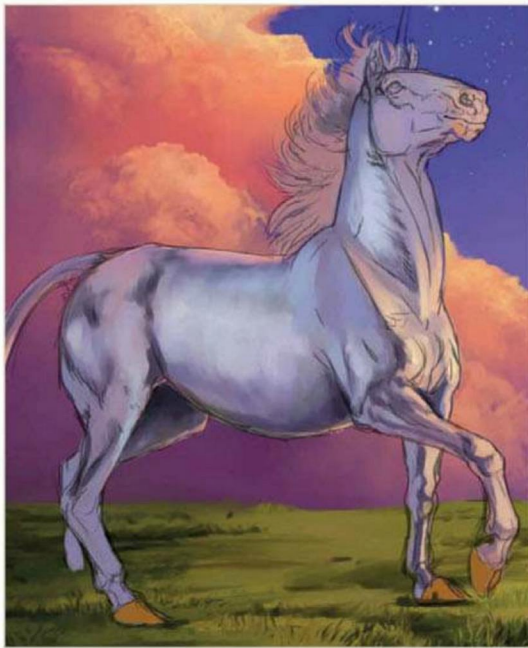
07 In the background Continue to refine the grass and stone texture. The cliff is made of large rectangular shapes that reflect sun, sky and grass bounce light. Paint stars on a new layer with the Variable Spatter Airbrush, set to a Flow value of 1-4. Erase any over-spray and pick out a few stars with the F-X Glow brush using bright blues and magentas.



08 **Revise the sketch** The original sketch was too stiff and had the wrong body language, so it was scrapped and begun again. This new sketch has the right feeling, a much more buoyant expression and a stronger gesture.



09 **Base coat** Create a new layer under this sketch and begin with a neutral underpainting of dull pink using the Round Oil Pastel tool. This dull colour is a base to build up value and form that matches the warm pastel sunset colours.



10 **Look to the light** This unicorn is an unnatural blue-white that adds to the air of fantasy but also helps to integrate him with the magical surroundings. He is well lit from the front by the setting sun and reflects the pink and blue of the sky around him.



11 **Establish shadows** As with the sky and clouds, this fellow has a gradient over him. The core shadow of this unicorn is purple. On one side of the core shadow is the ethereal blue, while on the other side peach blends into gold. Paint the core shadow first and then blend the colours out from there using your Pastel tool.



12 **Add detail** Paint fuzz with a small brush and wispy strokes. Paint the small vein on his stomach with a light blue line and then shade in dull purple right under it for the shadow. The metallic gold hooves are ochre at first, then a dark mahogany line with the sunset colours blended on one side and the grass hues on the other.

13 **Face hues** Model the face in golds and blues, with sunlight coming from slightly below. Paint the crystal horn with a dark blue base and light aqua at the edges, adding the shine of the sun. Create a new layer set to Overlay and airbrush some gold around the horn for a magical glow.



14 **Add a rainbow** There is no way this piece would be complete without a rainbow and shooting stars. Create a new layer for these effects, and use the Glow brush for some awesome meteors too. Select the Soft Airbrush tool and a bright red. Use the natural arc in your wrist or elbow to paint the curve of the rainbow.



15 **Rainbow colours** Slide the colour selector around the circle to each hue to complete your red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo and violet arcs. Humans see green really well so that part of the rainbow always seems brightest, while indigo often blurs into blue and violet. Adjust the colours as needed to get an even spread of tones.

RESOURCES

Anatomy books are available online such as *An Atlas of Animal Anatomy for Artists* by W Ellenberger, as well as endless videos for gesture drawing. Pause a video every few frames and draw the animal. Set a time limit of three to five minutes and don't erase!

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It can be useful to consider how webbed wings are similar to human hands. This will help you avoid creating wings that are simply long sticks. The thin, finger-like bones of the wings should have joints similar to the digits that you can observe on your hand.

ERIC PROCTOR

Artist info



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Eric enjoys bringing the world of fantasy to life through digital painting using Photoshop and ArtRage. His technique and style are a blend of modern methods with roots in traditional oil painting, and usually use a large colour palette and high saturation.

How to draw dragon wings

Learn the basic anatomy, structure and sources of dragons wings so you can paint a realistic and believable creature of the skies

Dragon wings come in all shapes, sizes and styles, but serve a similar basic function – flight. How your dragon is designed to fly can determine whether their wings are thin and membranous like bats, feathered, broad fins or insectoid, so consider the size and weight of your dragon when designing this crucial part. A heavy dragon may need large, broad wings for extreme lift, while a smaller, lighter dragon could have smaller wings with a greater range of rotation that allows for faster flapping.

Western dragons are often drawn with bat-like webbed wings. When designing these types of wings, you need look no further than your own hand for an interesting anatomical reference. A bat's wings are amazingly similar to human arms and hands, with the metacarpals and finger bones greatly lengthened. Imagine your own fingers stretched out with membranes connecting them and you have a basic guideline for dragon wings.

Dragons with feathered or sketched (scaled feathers) wings have more in common with modern birds. The way your feathered dragon flies will dictate what birds will make the best references for you to use. Gliding dragons would have wings like an albatross while fast, maneuverable ones may have wings more like a falcon, so consider these details.

We can also go back in time to the ancient pterodactyl for inspiration, whose wings provided both flight and walking functions. The design of the wing extended from a long fourth finger on the front limbs to the hind legs, giving the dinosaur a kite-like appearance. Wings like this could belong to a dragon that is designed to spend most of its time soaring on currents of air to gain lift.

Membranous wings allow strong light to penetrate and be seen on the other side. This is called subsurface scattering and it can give your wings a touch of realism. My dragon's wings are glowing in the thinnest areas and the effect is less where the wings are thicker.



● Use an initial sketch then input colour on a value basis according to your biological bone and muscle references



01 Wing anatomy

Webbed wings are built up of bones similar to that of a bat where the metacarpals (the bones in your palm) and finger bones are extremely elongated. A membrane of skin connects them at the ends and to the back of the animal. Where the wing attaches to the back of the dragon is up to you. Attaching the wing to the lowest point of the back (or even the start of the tail) will create a broader wing that allows for rapid take off.



02 Folded wing

When not in use, membranous dragon wings can fold due to their extreme flexibility. The skin will fold and bend between the bones like rolls of leather and tuck against the dragon's body. There is also a degree of elasticity in the membrane that retracts, so drawing a closed wing does not necessarily mean creating a massive abundance of folds. A convenient reference is a closed umbrella.



03 Open wing

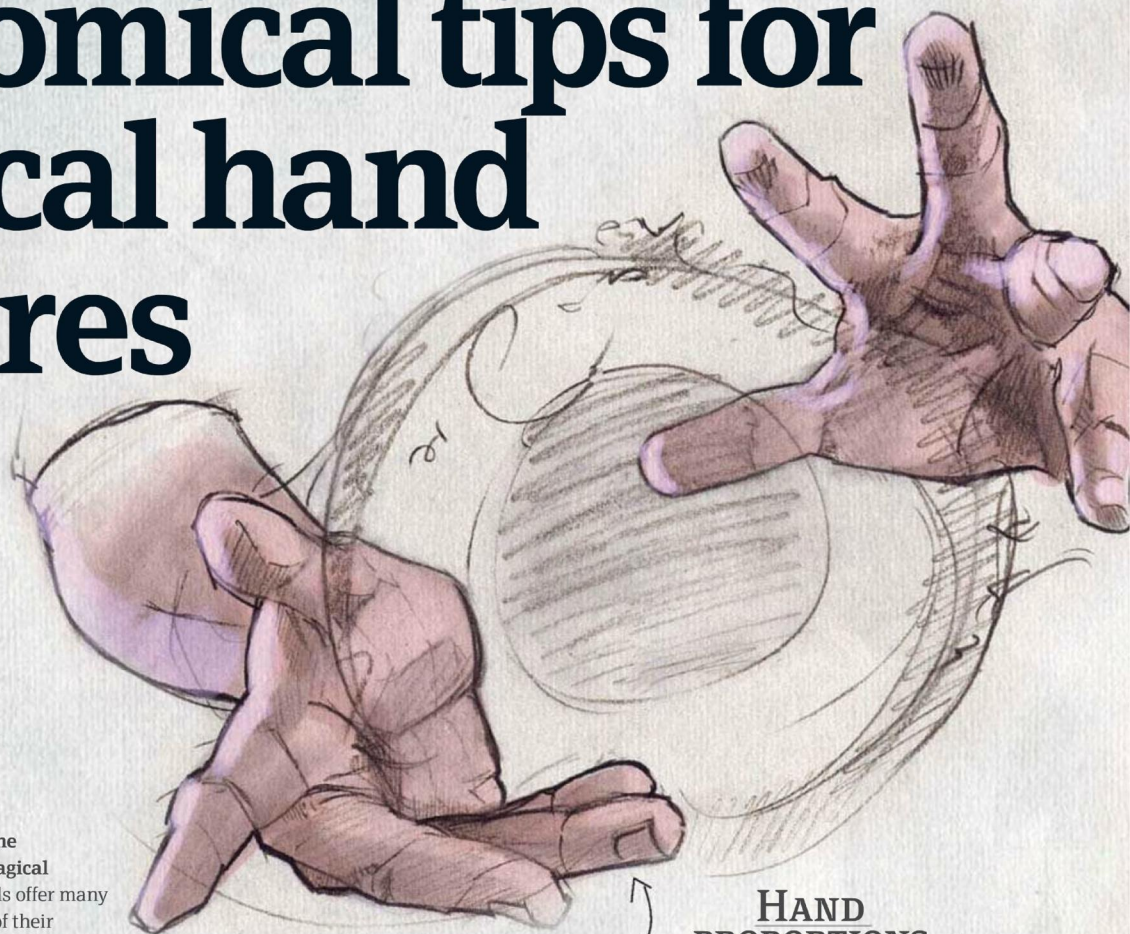
A fully open dragon wing means that all wing bones are spread and the membrane is stretched, creating the maximum wingspan. There should be no folds, wrinkles or places where the wing appears floppy. Drawing stretch lines will help convince your viewer that the wing is completely taut and firm. An open wing would normally represent a dragon that is gliding, but it can also be used for an intimidating posture.

Anatomical tips for magical hand gestures

Learn how the basic anatomy of the hand in perspective can help simplify drawing magical hand gestures

In this tutorial I would like to look at the importance of the hands as used for magical characters in fantasy illustration. Hands offer many unique challenges to the artist because of their ability to take on so many different forms. While parts of the hand may be profiled, other parts of the same hand might be in an extremely foreshortened state. The key to overcoming this challenge is to understand the basic forms and shapes involved in the anatomy of the hand and how they relate to one another. There is a large amount of reference material available, but I suggest instead of taking the time to go out and find it, to start by just looking at your own hands and comparing them and their movements. Many of you might have taken a basic drawing class and remember the sessions of drawing cubes, cylinders and spheres in perspective. Taking what we know about geometric shapes and applying that knowledge to bones, joints and muscle mass, we can make a complicated thing like drawing the hand quick and easy.

Through the hands the artist can portray character temperament, emotion, power, movement – the list goes on. A magical character might use vocal and material elements for his craft, but very often they will use the hands. It is very important, therefore, for an artist wanting to create a believable magical character to have a good foundation in drawing hand forms.

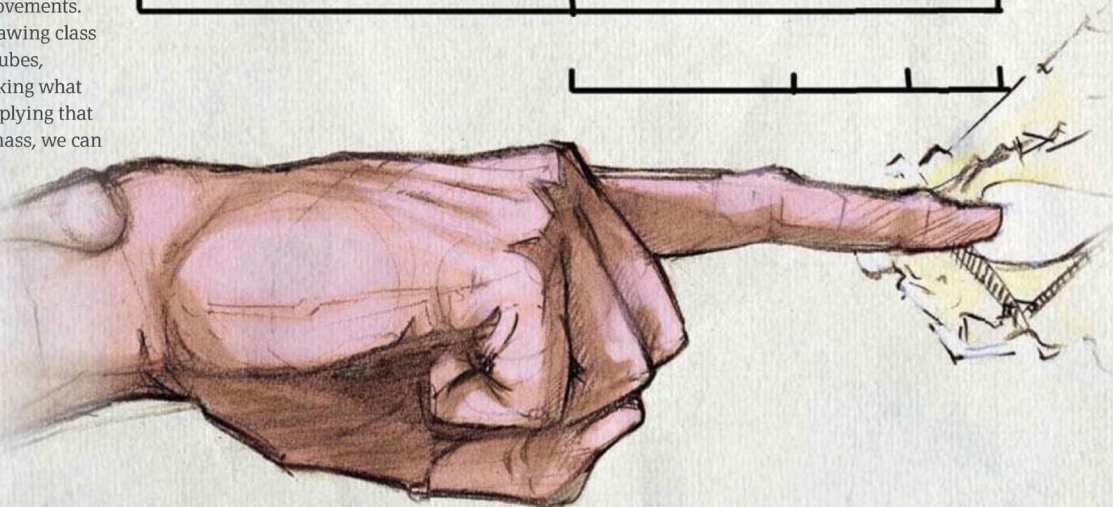


COMPOSE THE CONCEPT

With practice, quick sketches (like these hands gathering and channelling magic) can be put together easily for composition or conceptual work. I tried to loosen the hands and give the gesture some movement. This drawing is challenging because of the perspective of the hands. Through anatomy we can understand shape, volume and proportion, so gestures can become more convincing. With the anatomical foundation in place, we can build the character in any direction we choose.

HAND PROPORTIONS

Here a hand sends out a focused magical attack from one pointed finger. The proportions of the hand are very simple. The finger is half the length of the hand. The finger itself can also be divided up into half and then half again. Even though this is a side profile, the curve of the hand allows us to see the top of it.



CLAWED HANDS

This hand is poised holding power inside of its curled fingers. Stacking fingers on top of one another is relatively simple to do. The more muscular shapes that you choose to define, the more strained and tense the hand appears. The bulge at the wrist is the two muscles used for pulling the thumb back, and the tendons running from the base of the thumb towards them are apparent. Those two muscles give you a good pivot point for the hand on the forearm.

PALM UPWARDS

In this drawing we have a palm facing up for the purpose of generating and holding magic. The thumb is extremely foreshortened and the fingers themselves are in different stages of foreshortening. Notice how the palm of the hand creates a pocket where the main tendons of the fingers come together and continue up the forearm to the palmaris longus muscle.

**EDWARD
"JOEL"
WITTLIF**

Artist info



paperbag-ninja.
deviantart.com

I am a self-taught digital artist living in Colorado. I have a strong background and formal training in traditional art. My interests in art vary all the way from Impressionistic plein air painting to comic art and speedpainting.

FACING PALM

Here is something you might see for a magical character creating a shield or pushing out some other kind of spell. You will notice that the fingers are not perfectly cylindrical but have more of a square shape. The palm is square with the thumb coming out in a triangular, wedge shape. The bones of the fingers come in towards one another inside the hand. Most of what fills in the square shape of the palm is muscle. With a particularly muscular character you would want to really square the palm out.

FOREARM

The forearm in this sketch is significantly foreshortened to give an accurate sense of perspective and movement to the hand. Foreshortening is one of the crucial techniques that give action poses life and makes them feel dynamic and exciting.

MUSCLE STUDY

The muscles in our out-stretched palm are predominantly flexed. Basic anatomy books can be a godsend for getting to grips with the intricate web of muscles that make up the hand.

Design a fantasy landscape

Compose and paint a fantastical environment for your characters

We all love a good fantasy piece and the landscape is often what sets the tone. They can be beautiful, epic and exotic, and they whisper of heroic adventures across vast, unexplored lands.

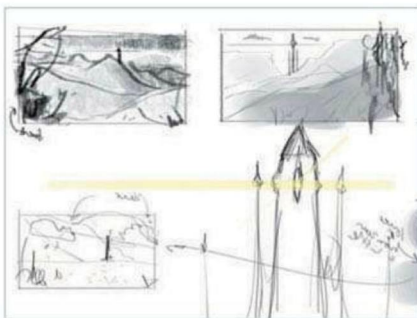
Fantasy art is a representation of a fictional world. What differentiates fantasy from realism are the supernatural elements and structures, and the idyllically represented environments that perpetuate this vision, often being pushed to an appropriate extreme. For instance, a dark fantasy environment will be full of atmospheric shadows and mysterious tones, and a romantic and happy setting will typically use very saturated colours.

The fantasy genre thrives on a combination of realism and romanticism, often with visuals that take us back to another era. Medieval touches such as castles and towers, therefore, make us think of fantasy, as well as unexplored and uninhabited land, the likes of which is rarely seen in our contemporary lives. A good grasp of colour theory and your reference library of images readily available is vital to achieve a convincing result.

Fantasy art can be kept low key or it can be overtly magical. The painting in this tutorial will be set in a medieval era, featuring fields and mountains combined with white towers representing something hopeful. It will have a romantic feel to it but a melancholy undertone with the ultimate aim to invite a story and get the viewer excited to join the magical journey.

Sketch, set values and colour a scene

Lead the viewer through your world with composition and tone



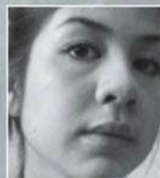
01 Thumbnails Take some time to gather reference material and inspiration online or in art books. When you have an idea of what you want to do, start off by scribbling a few thumbnails of different compositions and ideas for the elements that will appear in the landscape. Your first idea will probably not be the best, so throw lots of roughs down to give you a choice.



02 Values Open a new document and copy and paste your favourite thumbnail into it (or scan if you've been working on paper – you will probably have to enlarge it). Now you can add values to your image. The values should clearly show the focal point in your piece. In this case, the tower is important to convey the fantasy theme and is blocked in light tones against the darker background.

LILI
IBRAHIM

Artist info

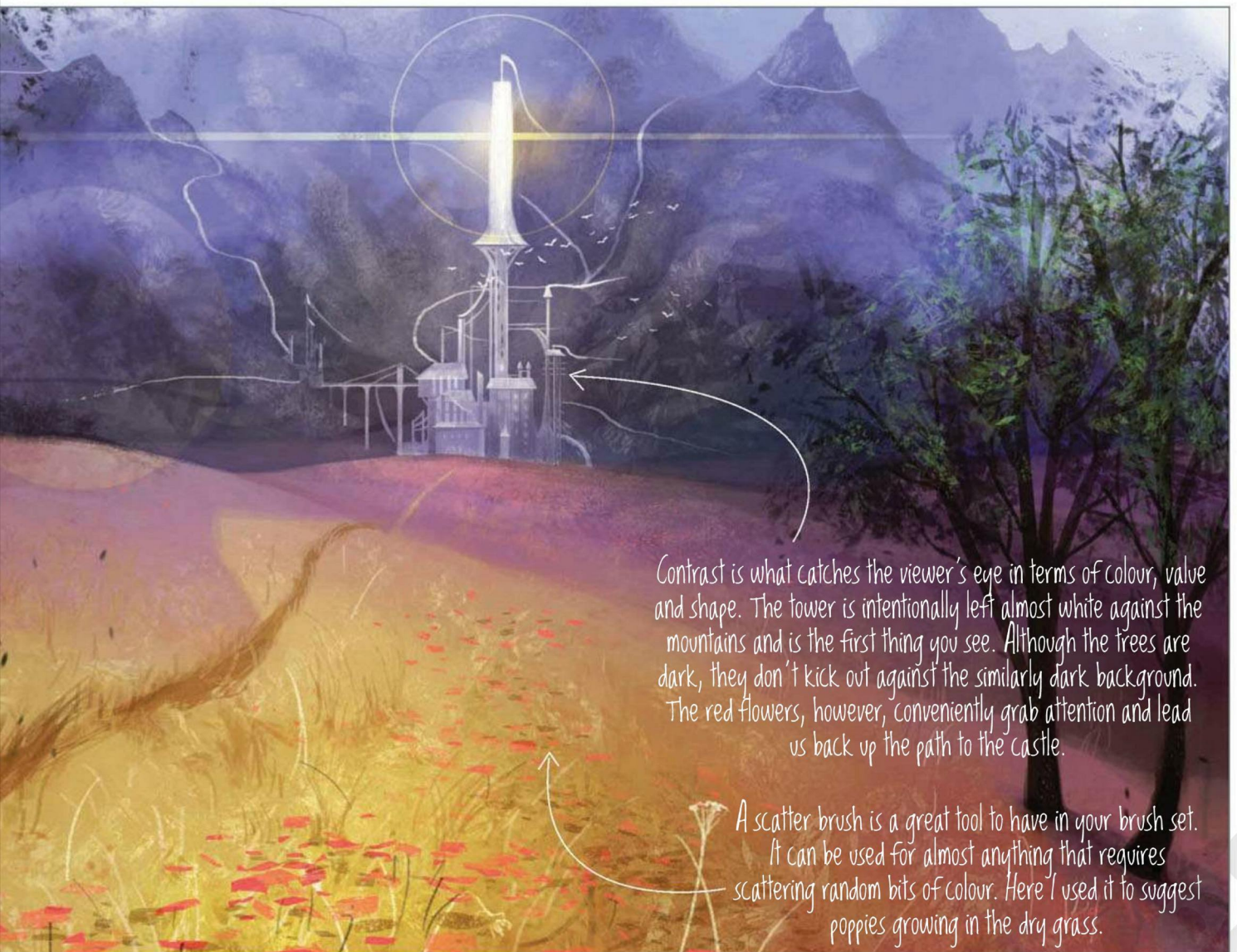


www.liliibrahim.com

I am a freelance concept artist and illustrator with a big passion for fictional worlds. Bringing something new and exciting into fantasy and sci-fi is an ambitious goal, but every step I take closer to it gets me more determined.

Create interest by opting for a colour scheme that isn't the most obvious choice. Although grass is green and mountains tend to be grey, seasons, weather and the time of the day all affect the way our eyes pick up colours. Manipulating this and making more interesting colours is a good way to push the atmosphere in your piece.

Fantasy Art Skills



Contrast is what catches the viewer's eye in terms of colour, value and shape. The tower is intentionally left almost white against the mountains and is the first thing you see. Although the trees are dark, they don't kick out against the similarly dark background. The red flowers, however, conveniently grab attention and lead us back up the path to the castle.

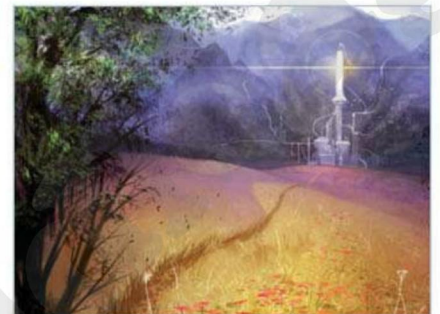
A scatter brush is a great tool to have in your brush set. It can be used for almost anything that requires scattering random bits of colour. Here I used it to suggest poppies growing in the dry grass.



03 Colour Colour can be added easily with adjustment layers. Add the colours of your choice to a layer set to Overlay and, with the colours on a separate layer, you can easily play around with them by adjusting the hue (via Cmd/Ctrl+U), or the Color Balance adjustment Cmd/Ctrl+B. Colour can help you communicate a mood, and since it is a fantasy piece there aren't any limitations.



04 Rendering process You can now start rendering your image. Always keep your focal point in mind, and if you add elements they should only make this clearer. I kept the majority of the painting simple, but added details to the castle. The trees on either side are fairly dark but the green leaves give a feeling of emerging from something dark into something hopeful.



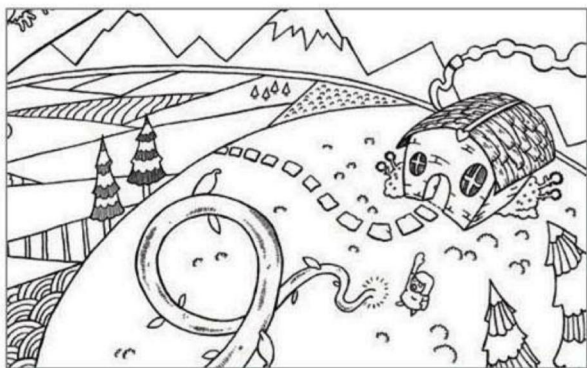
05 Tweaks, details and adjustments As the artwork continues developing you can push the values, which is best done with a Levels or a Hue/Saturation adjustment layer, depending on where you want to take the painting. These two will boost your existing tones, but by tweaking the colour balance you could also instantly change the mood in your painting.

Fairytale line art

Gareth Barnes shows you how to create a scene from a fairytale ideal for a children's colouring book

Fairytales are everywhere at the moment, and with *Jack the Giant Killer* set for release next year, we thought it would be the perfect subject for a piece of line art just waiting for kids to dive into the story, crayons in hand, and colour for themselves. A great way to make a colouring-book page appealing is to exaggerate certain features within the image and explore different ways of applying shapes and patterns to the piece. Be imaginative with your choice of subject, too, as this will add interest and provoke curiosity. A lot of this kind of line art won't include a background and as a result can appear flat, but with a little attention paid to composition and detail, the scene will really capture the viewer's interest. The background should be fairly basic, but draw the viewer in by suggesting features that lie beyond, for example, including mountains or cities, to enhance the narrative.

The process I followed when creating this fairytale design is the same process I use when I create any piece of artwork, whether I use only traditional mediums, digital tools or both for the project. There are five distinct stages that I work through, from planning the basic content all the way through to completion of the final masterpiece. I hope these points provide some useful insight and help you make fun and engaging line art of your own!



Tell me a story...

One way to make the image interesting is to create a sense of narrative. A line drawing of a house, for example, is purely representational. If, however, you included a honey-covered bear running out of the house and a swarm of bees flying out of the chimney, you would see a relationship between the elements of the picture as well as an injection of fun. In our image, the smoke from the chimney mimics the line of the beanstalk, creating unity in the viewer's mind.



Create your own line art



Planning Explore different ways of composing with speedy sketches of your basic scene.



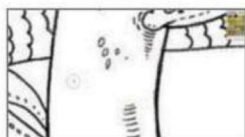
Development Draw a full-sized rough including all of the key elements and characters.



Refine Make the linework bolder and crisper either using a fine-liner pen or digital adjustments once scanned.



Go digital Crop the image, maximise contrast and make other tweaks in your software of choice to the scanned piece.



Tidy up Smooth the lines and delete any specks or blemishes with the Brush tool when happy.

GARETH BARNES

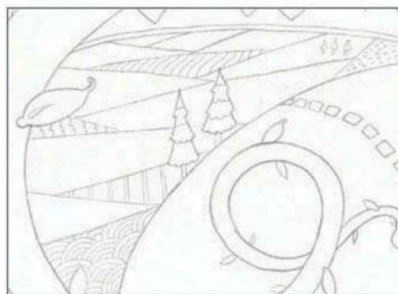
Artist info



www.garethbarnes.com

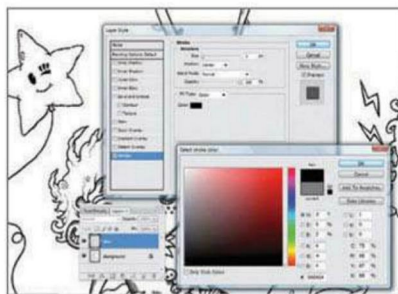
I like to produce art that keeps people guessing and appeals aesthetically. I try to achieve this by combining unrelated and unusual subject matter.

Top techniques for fairytale art



Background and composition

It's important to explore different compositions and, having done so, roughly draw in pencil where elements of the background should go such as buildings, fields and clouds. Use a sharp pencil to refine the linework, adding basic details as you go. A nice way to make a background more engaging is to include patterns. These can be used to divide up areas of the landscape and appear more decorative. Use a black fine-liner pen to complete the background with varying line widths to create depth.



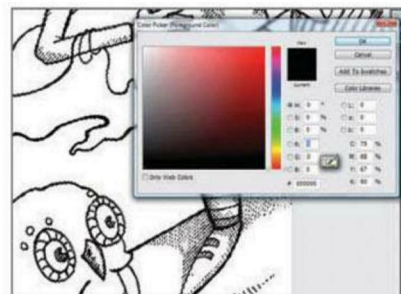
Simple selections

If you want to make changes to your compositional elements after you've scanned the linework, selections can help you here. In this piece I wanted to change the star balloon, as it just seemed a little too big. I made a selection around it using the Polygonal Lasso tool and pasted it onto its own layer. You can then use layer styles to Stroke the shape for cleaner linework and use Edit>Transform>Scale to resize.



Character development

Once I was happy with my basic composition, I worked first on sketching and then refining the central elements of the piece. The most important is Jack, as he is the main character, the recognisable one from the story and the figure you need your audience to connect with. I opted for quite a stylised look, particularly for Jack and his mother on the ground. Don't be afraid to try a look that is a bit unusual, it will be refreshing, especially if you are working with well-known stories like fairytales.



Digital tweaks

The joy of scanning your work in is the adjustments you can make to enhance the image in your software of choice. When creating this image, after scanning the drawing I found that the background wasn't the bright white that I wanted and there were blemishes. Maximise contrast with a Brightness/Contrast adjustment, then use the Eyedropper tool to select the background white and the Brush tool to paint away any specks.

“Don't be afraid to try a look that is a bit unusual, it will be refreshing”



Shading

An image that is purely linework can often appear too flat and key features can be lost. However, with a little shading, these will stand out and the completed picture will have much more impact. In this particular image the figure of Jack was an important focal point in the scene and, with a little shading and detail work, he is both bold and eye-catching. The picture will also have a greater sense of depth and therefore be a more engaging image.

Add atmosphere with sunset effects

Stage your composition and paint dazzling sunset images using these simple guiding principles

Guide your viewer's eye through the composition using carefully placed elements. The bulk of the weight in this image is on the right but I want the eye to move from left to right. I place a small rabbit on the left to catch and guide the eye in this way.

ANASTASIA KOROCHANSKAYA

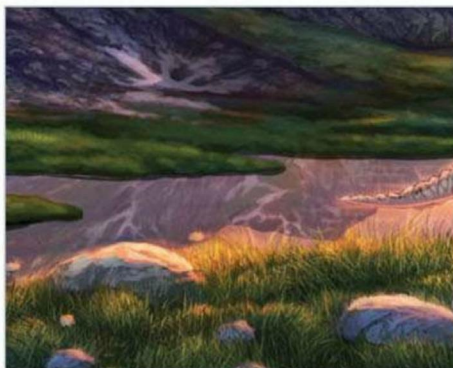
Artist info



balaa.deviantart.com

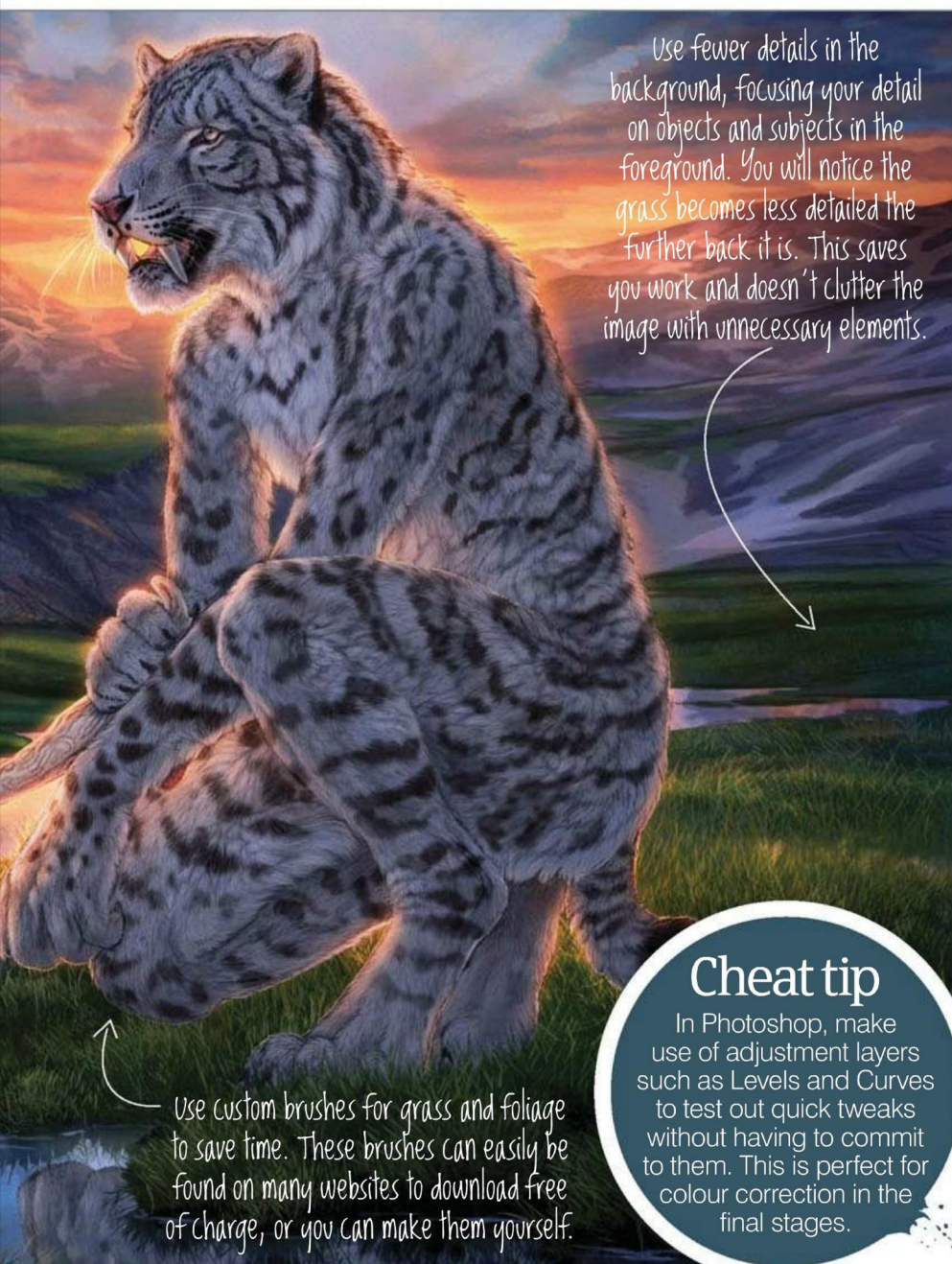
The aim of Anastasia's art has always been to capture the ubiquitous beauty of nature while infusing it with the personal experience of divinity felt when looking into nature's heart. She specialises in fantasy animal hybrids and character artwork.

The sunset, when the last familiar colours of day at last fall silent, can create great atmosphere in artwork. That last splash of colour and warmth, tantalising and teasing, plunges us into night. Perhaps this is why sunset imagery holds us in such sway. For the artist, the opportunities to exploit mood and emotion through the use of this light are almost limitless. Use the contrasting cool and warm colours of sunset, for example, to paint a foreboding picture or to reassure that the night will pass auspiciously.



Water at sunset

Water will reflect the sky and objects around it. The water closest to the sunset will mirror the warm sky and gradually become cooler. Don't forget to reflect your mountains in it too. Keep the main elements on separate layers, duplicate them, flip them vertically, move them in place and lower the opacity so the water shows through.

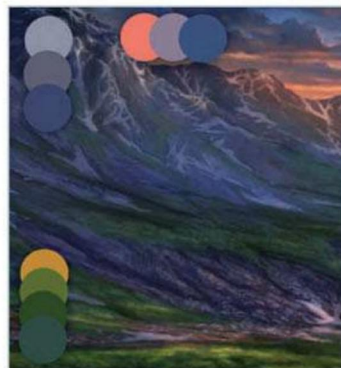


Use fewer details in the background, focusing your detail on objects and subjects in the foreground. You will notice the grass becomes less detailed the further back it is. This saves you work and doesn't clutter the image with unnecessary elements.

Use custom brushes for grass and foliage to save time. These brushes can easily be found on many websites to download free of charge, or you can make them yourself.

Cheat tip

In Photoshop, make use of adjustment layers such as Levels and Curves to test out quick tweaks without having to commit to them. This is perfect for colour correction in the final stages.



Colour temperature

Images at sunset will shift in colour temperature. The atmospheric blue of the day will become gradually more purple as the sun gets closer to the horizon. The greens will also become cooler where the sun's light is no longer hitting them. You will notice the colour tone changes throughout the image due to the contrast of cool and warm. In neutral light, the cat's fur would be grey but because objects absorb the colours around them, in our sunset the grey becomes purple. The same is true for the mountains, snow and the white rabbit. The grass is also a cooler green where there is no light. The mountains closer to the sun are cast in a pink-orange light while the mountains furthest away take on cooler shades.



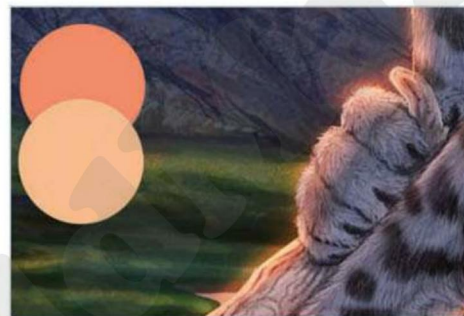
Position your subject

Using backlighting and positioning your character in front of the light source can make it stand out and draw the viewer's eye straight to the focal point. Backlighting also creates a more dramatic feel to the image over frontal lighting. With the sunset's warm colours concentrating in a corona directly behind the cat, the cooler purple-blues of his coat stand out vividly.



Light outside the box

Light should not feel closed in, but should give the illusion of moving beyond the frame. Elements in the foreground that catch the light, such as the flowers, can create this effect. Just the edge of one of the blossoms is painted within the frame. This gives the impression that the image continues beyond what they see.



Overlays to create halo light

Light affects the space around an object and not just the object itself. It spills into the air around the figure creating a halo effect. You will notice the reddish light around the knuckles of the sabre-toothed cat. Using an Overlay layer, a pink or light orange colour and a Soft Round brush set at a high opacity level, delicately paint the light on and around the edge of your subjects.

Learn to use techniques such as panel layout, speed lines and dynamic poses to create a fight scene

**SANDRA
CHANG-
ADAIR**

Artist info



www.sandrachang.net

Sandra Chang-Adair is a fantasy illustrator and comic-book artist. She loves painting warriors, mermaids and steampunk characters. She has worked for *Heavy Metal* magazine, White Wolf and Fantagraphics Books.

USE DYNAMIC POSES

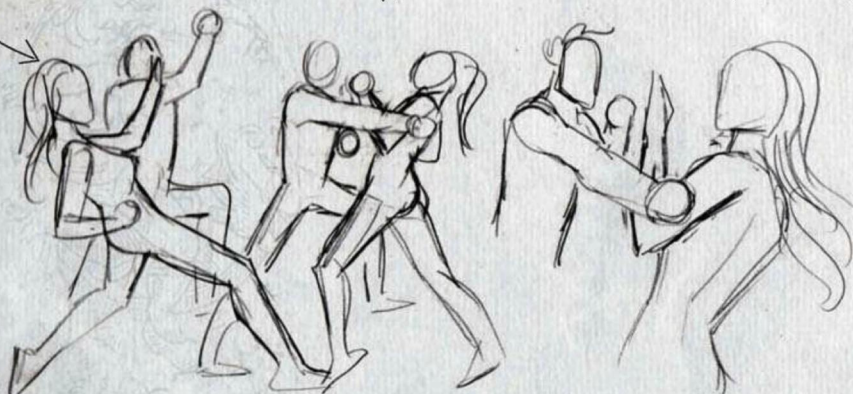
Plan out your fight choreography using small thumbnails to draw the interaction between your characters. Think of making it dynamic by drawing the characters at the highest point of the action. If you're not sure what that is, break the movement into several sketches from different angles and pick the best pose. Limbs foreshortened or tossing punches should be drawn following diagonal angles.

Explosive action in comics

Creating a fight scene in an action-based comic can be challenging. Depicting fight choreography between your characters requires a basic understanding of the fight techniques themselves, but a good grasp of offensive movements such as punches, knee and elbow strikes, kicks and throws can be learned from watching martial-arts movies.

The fight must flow from panel to panel so your story is easy to interpret. Start with thumbnails of the fight poses between your characters. Sketch several of them out and then, using a computer or just tape and tracing paper, put the sketches together in a logical sequence. Make sure you vary the size of the characters to create interest. Put one big hero shot of the characters in conflict on the largest panel of the page to make the most impact, using techniques like foreshortening to convey the explosive action. After you've composed the scene, scan it in and increase the size to the industry standard 25.4 x 38.1cm. Print it out and pencil over it on a lightbox, then scan your pencil work into Manga Studio to ink and Photoshop to colour.

A powerful side kick at the moment of impact where the foot connects with the opponent's face is the highest point of action for the attacking girl. The opponent is also dynamic, reeling backwards from the kick. Twisting limbs and clawed hands convey pain, not to mention a little blood splatter.



Fantasy Art Skills



Convincingly portraying action in static drawings can be helped by speed or action lines. Without them, envisioning what is happening can be difficult. Lines drawn at the movement's beginning to its end can show in which direction the character is throwing a punch or, in this instance, falling.

HEIGHTEN YOUR ACTION

Plan your panel-by-panel sequence and think of the best way to convey your story. Design your page layout using rhythm, overlapping panels, varying box sizes, long horizontal or vertical panels. Action that can't be contained can even break out of the lines. When you like your layout, sketch your fight thumbnails into each panel.



Explosive action that cannot be limited to lines can be expressed by having the characters reach out beyond the frames of the panels. Limbs breaking the space add heightened excitement to the fight scene. The male character is getting stomach-thrown by the heroine and is kicked out of the panel.

SHOW FIGHT MOTION

When you pencil your page, speed lines or curved strokes can show the motion of your character and where the body will end up next. Action lines follow the perspective. If you ink in Manga Studio, there is a Speed Line palette that can automatically do this for you.



Map out a fantasy city

Design and lay out a convincing imaginary city with three-dimensional features

Always base your initial sketch of an imaginary or fantastical map on the layout of a real city to ensure that the topography of the town is realistic and convincing. Once you have established a rough idea of how a city is laid out it's much easier to use your imagination to build up a fantasy world.

When planning the design of a city, do a little research about the function of the places you are adding and what requirements they might have that would affect their placement in relation to each other. Your fantasy city will have certain requirements based on the world that it's set in – the kind of buildings and shops may be magic-focused and include unusual locations like a potion-maker or a village witch. Making things fantastic yet believable is key.

In this piece, for example, we added the harbour on the top-left side of the map. Fish markets are often located near harbours, so we drew the market within easy reach of the port. The apothecary was placed nearby, as the commercial areas of towns tend to be close together. Then there's a forest near the apothecary, as it seems logical that an apothecary might rely on ingredients sourced from there for its products. Remember, a map of a fantasy city will usually feature in a book, graphic novel or videogame as a way for the reader or player to orient themselves, so it needs to be practical.

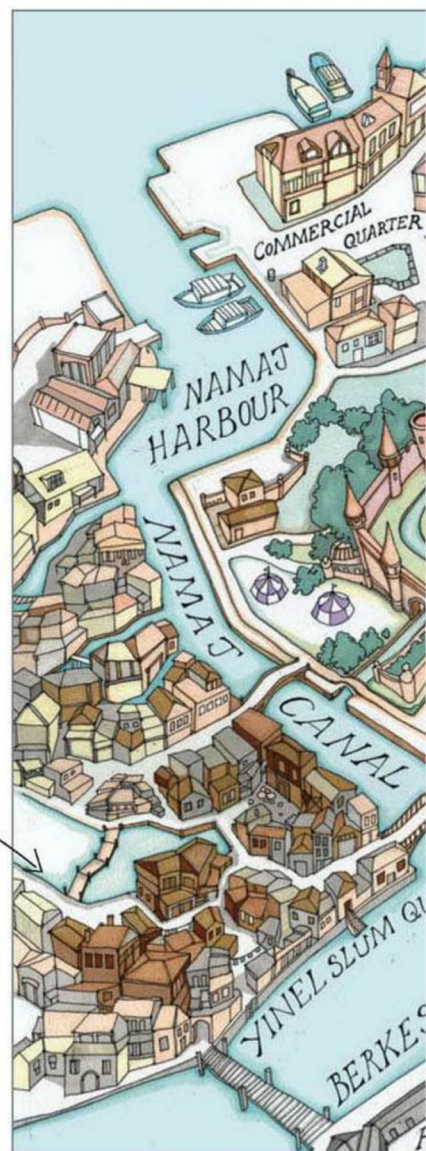
After all of the buildings have been drawn, plot out the roads and make sure that they lead from each area in a realistic way. A fantasy city map is a great project to really let your imagination run free and, once you have the basic structure laid out, you should find that different elements will start to slot together quite logically.

ABI DAKER

Artist info



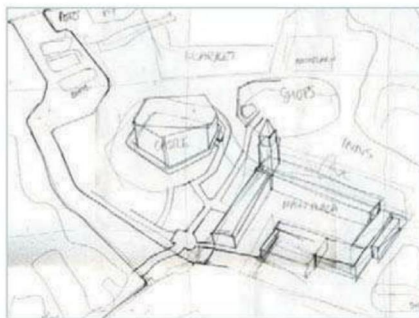
www.abigaildaker.com
I have been heavily influenced by travelling and the experiences of living abroad. My work is usually characterised by close attention to detail and the inclusion of interesting and unusual perspectives.



Think about why your city was built and what makes it great. Using Venice as inspiration, this city benefits from trading across the sea so the port is central.

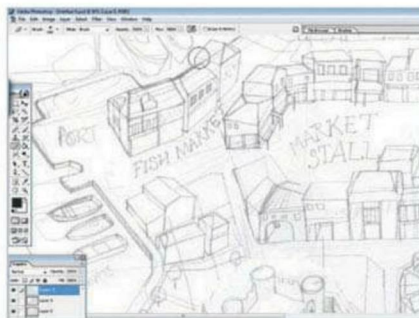
Design and embellish your map

Create a world that is both fantastical and believable



01 Sketch your borders

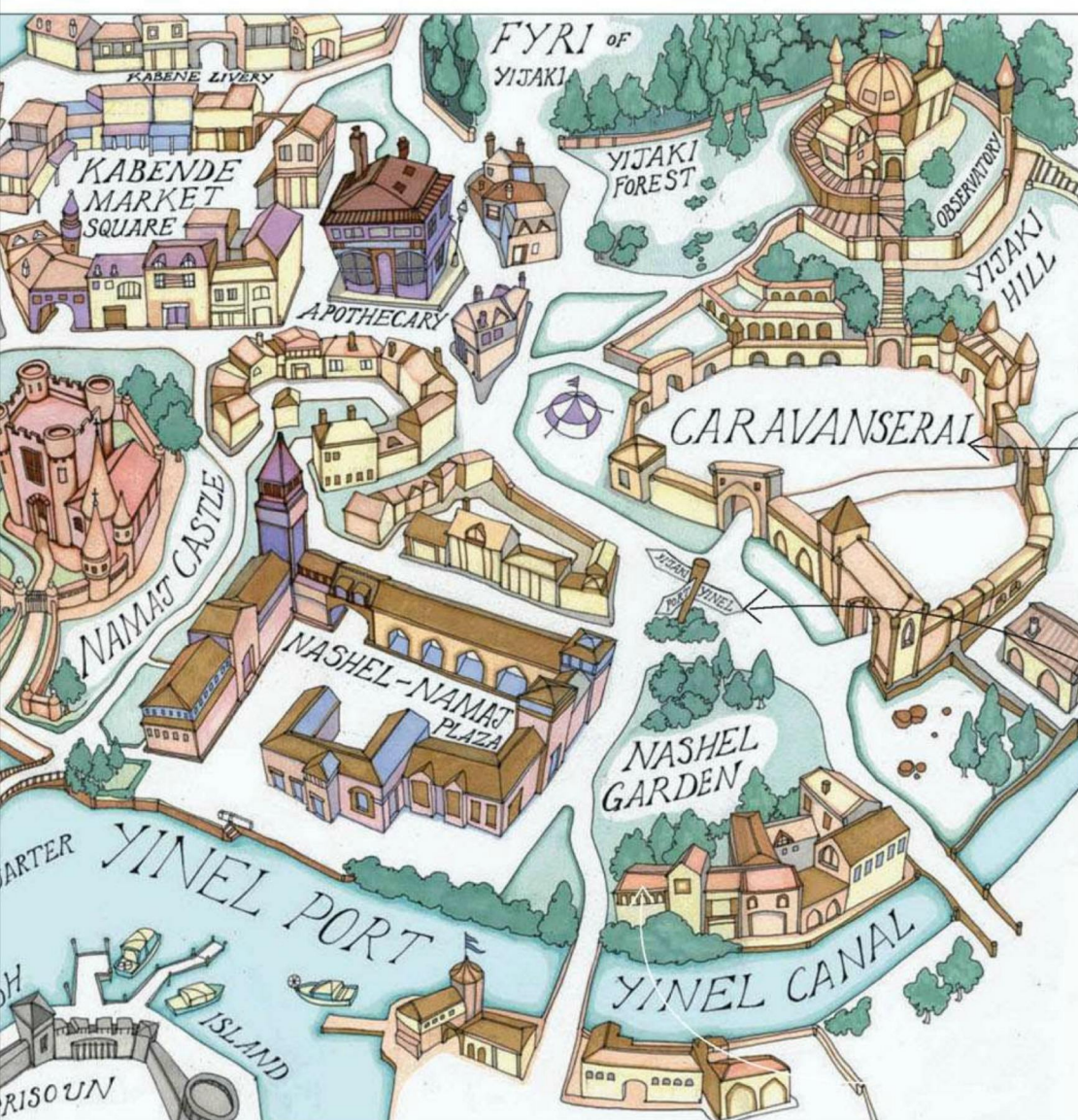
Find a map of a real location to use as a rough guide (we were inspired by Venice as it's traditionally synonymous with trade and travel) and sketch out the key elements of your city. Look at where buildings are placed in the guide map and plan the location of some of the major buildings. Start with the key locations first then work down.



02 Build up your city

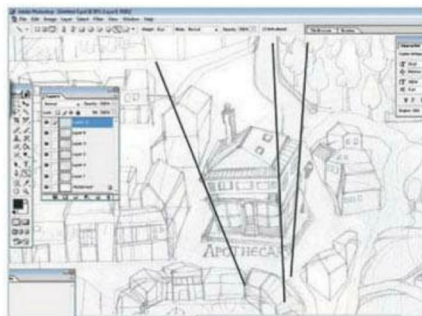
Add more details to the sketched map. It will need non-realistic buildings and features, so think about where these would fit in with the more conventional locations. As you add each building, try to visualise the growth of an actual city. Expand your illustration organically, adding on more and more details methodically, starting from the centre.

Fantasy Art Skills



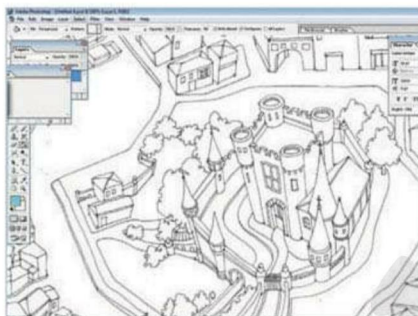
Consider the story of your city, how it began, how it developed and what the people who occupy it are like. Placing greater emphasis on certain buildings gives clues to the structure of your fantasy society.

Adding roads, streets and signposts gives an even greater impression of a bustling metropolis. Including roads that branch off beyond the map gives a sense of the wider world outside of the city's limits.



03 Add depth

Three-dimensional elements work brilliantly on a map and, in a fantasy city drawing, the perspective does not need to be rigid. Plot out the location of the building and add an extra dimension by using some converging lines to draw it from an aerial viewpoint. Early-modern maps of major cities very often use this very same effect.



04 Elaborate and embellish

Don't be afraid to mix different types of architecture or to add unusual elements as this all enhances the fantasy feel. Several turrets and oddly shaped chimneys give it a magical mood. A slightly unrealistic colour palette will also enhance this within your map. You can use purple and pink for some of the shadows and highlights to get a subtle effect.



05 Add some text

Handwritten labels will finish your map off beautifully. Have fun with the street and district names but keep them consistent – the names on this map take inspiration from languages that would have been heard on the Silk Road, like ancient Persian, Arabic and Farsi. These tie in with the importance of the caravanserai in the town.

Evolution of an image

Find out how to use scale and tone to create a fiery effect

Francis Dollez

Artist info



francisdollez.blogspot.fr
Software used **Photoshop**

I have always drawn since I was young, so I quickly decided to study graphic arts and illustration. The new technologies at our disposal bring a great freedom of movement, creation and experimentation. For me digital painting is a fabulous medium to get an amazingly emotional response.

01



03



02



04



About Red Dragon

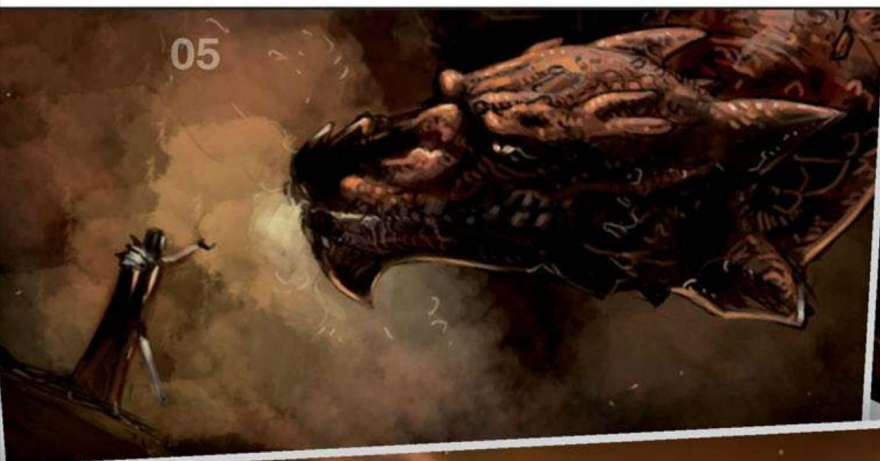
My intention was to create a huge dragon coming out of his dark hiding place, appearing through a thick fog. The warrior is not here to face the beast, but to share something, as if he is communicating with him. My aim was to give the viewer the feeling of the dragon's immensity beside the warrior. Surrounded by a smoky and fiery ambiance, the brown and scarlet tones signify heat and danger.

01

I start with a quick sketch and use a landscape format to draw the dragon with its wings spread. This will create a sense of his large size, especially next to the warrior in front of him. I add an ochre background, which enhances the hot and tense atmosphere. As I continue I keep in mind the fiery effect I am trying to achieve. This motif can be introduced even at this stage.

02

I further suggest the background ambiance with reds, oranges and ochre, emulating the colours of heat and sulphur. I want to show the power of the dragon through his element; the burning fire. I place red tones in and around the dragon's mouth so I can make a nice contrast with the brighter lights that will come later. This is an important stage for laying the illustration's form.



03

At this stage I start to paint the beast with a dark red. The intention is to give it a shade of almost tortoiseshell scarlet. I add the first touch of light to its body and wings. I also add similar effects to the warrior figure below.

04

To make this atmosphere of fire and sulphur, I use a brush that was made to create very realistic clouds. When used with finesse it can give a great impression of smoke. I blend shades of black into the yellow here to darken it.

05

I tend to work the contrast between light and shadow. I try to balance between the light of the flames and the light of the sky behind the dragon. The light from above illuminates the tops of the wings and the dragon's back.

06

With different blend modes, like Saturation, I work on the ambiance by accentuating the flames' light, then continue to model the dragon and the warrior. I add embers and give the impression that the heat of his breath is making them fly.

07

For this last step I finalise the details of the painting. I accentuate saturation and light again to make a strong contrast, boosting the sliders near to their maximum values. To finish I create a blur, mostly on the wings, so that it brings out the power and movement of the dragon. All of this will give the scene tension; a big beast, lots of fire, smoke and the smell of danger in the air!

“ Different blend modes, like Saturation... work on the ambiance by accentuating the flames ”

How to draw combat poses

In this tutorial we'll explain how to make your fighting scenes as lively as possible

Every muscle, every vein, every line of force is pure expression. So, starting from there, you might ask how we can make a fighting scene both expressive and alive so that all of that compiled energy is apparent to the viewer.

The first key element is muscle structure. As this is extremely important it would be better to gain some knowledge of human anatomy, which can then be easily applied to any figure you might want to draw, such as human beings, mythological creatures or even mythical monsters. Knowing muscle structure and its correct representation will enrich your images and make it easier for the observer to read the drawing and its elements.

Tissue characteristics will also add expressivity to the structure. There are hard tissues (such as bones, contracted muscles or tendons) and soft tissues (such as relaxed muscles, adipose tissue and so on). These features can be drawn using a range of techniques, shadows or line thickness, colours or simple shades. For example, a contracted muscle can be rendered by augmenting its volume and increasing the detail and sharpness in the muscle borders on an arm or leg.

As with facial expressions, the body is able to communicate feelings and moods through its pose. For this reason choosing the right pose for your character is extremely important, as every single movement and body stance will enhance the visual sense of their personality. In a fighting scene, minute body details can help the viewer understand who's attacking (for example by the body and fist being hurled forward) and who's defending (for example by a curved bust and hands in front of the face).

To choose the right pose for your drawing, use a real-life model or, alternatively, photos and images from the internet or art and anatomy books. It's crucial to remember that the expressivity of the body is the result of the relationship between, and positioning of, all its parts: limbs, head and hands.

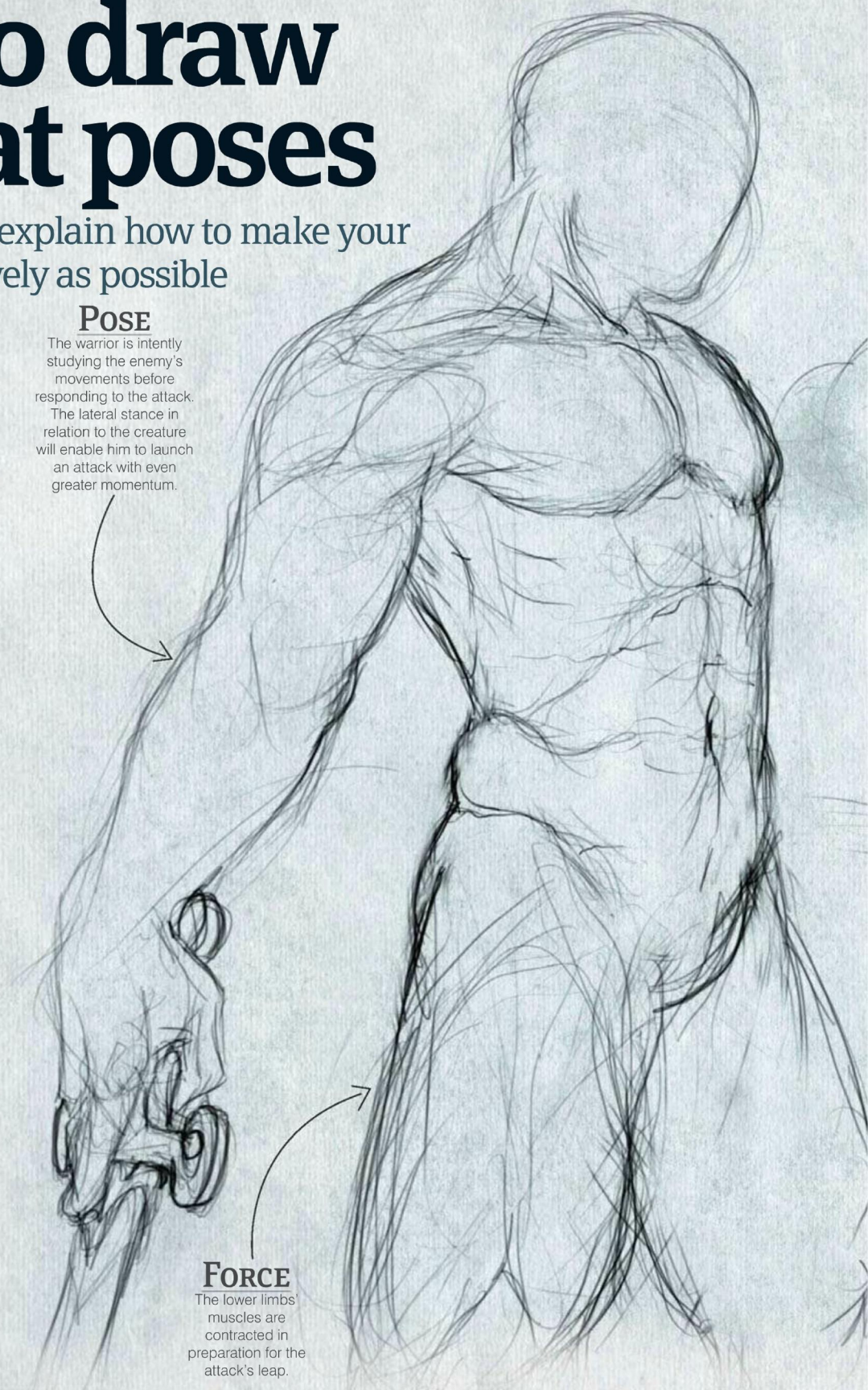
POSE

The warrior is intently studying the enemy's movements before responding to the attack.

The lateral stance in relation to the creature will enable him to launch an attack with even greater momentum.

FORCE

The lower limbs' muscles are contracted in preparation for the attack's leap.



Fantasy Art Skills

SCREAM

The wide-open mouth and the contraction of the platysma muscle make the creature's fierce roaring clearly readable.

GRIP

Arms and hands stay wide apart during the charge, ready to grip the enemy.

MOVEMENT

The legs' position and the twisting of the torso help convey a furious progress towards his foe.



Use light and shade to make muscles look tense

In this drawing, representing a warrior in the moment preceding an attack, you can see how simple lines and a light chiaroscuro effect can give expressivity and tone to the muscles. The right bicep for example, swollen with a faintly outlined vein, has well-marked borders defined with light shadows. The same effect is present in the tendons of the right forearm, contracted to firmly grip the shield. The elongated chest muscles, defined by simple lines, highlight the torso's flexure towards the right.

GIUSEPPE DI GIROLAMO

Artist info



www.peppeti.blogspot.it

I'm a freelance illustrator, character designer, artist and musician. I live in Palermo and study development graphics at the Academy of Fine Arts. I also belong to a gaming design team.

Combat poses

Understand the different poses characters can take in combat scenes

Here we'll show you how to draw a few basic fighting poses and how to give them character and expressivity. We have six sketches, each with a different pose and a different theme: punch, kick, guard, sword attack and magic attacks.

These are simple sketches, without details or ornaments and backgrounds, but they're forceful and expressive thanks to a few lines and one crucial element; all the sketches are drawn on lines of force – imaginary lines that follow the figure's shape and direction – giving each the necessary boost to make the simple pencil version really come alive.

PUNCH

In this sketch the figure is in the act of punching. The punch's force can be represented through the contraction of the arm and shoulder muscles, and through the body's momentum, rendered by the line of force starting from the right hand and going down to the right foot. The more accentuated this line, the more violent the punch will look.

GUARD

To represent a guard pose we drew a figure almost curled up on itself. We formed the punches firmly in front of the face, shoulders up, torso inclined with the knees bent. This will help him defend himself from frontal attacks and make him more agile in dodging the blows.

“ All the sketches are drawn on lines of force – imaginary lines that follow the figure's shape and direction ”

SWORD ATTACK FROM ABOVE

In this sketch the torsion of the arms and torso is exaggerated to make the sword blow look more violent. Arms, thorax and chest muscles are marked and defined to express the force this figure is using to attack. Legs and feet are just outlined to give the impression of a sudden burst of energy in the attack.

Fantasy Art Skills

MAGIC

The vast energy created in her hand spreads in the air and over her body up to the right hand; a spell ready to be hurled at her opponent.

MAGIC ATTACK

For this alternative fighting pose, a female figure is launching a magic attack. This is a truly classic pose for comic superheroes. As legs and feet are just outlined, we can guess that she's flying, while the right arm and shoulders are contracted and well defined. The right hand is wide open against her enemy, ready to launch her devastating spell.

EXTENSION

Her right arm is stretched upwards to the maximum to collect as much energy as possible, while the other arm and the shoulder are brought down to balance the bust.

POSE

The torso is bent laterally to counterbalance the raised shoulder.

FORCE LINES

In this drawing the imaginary line of force goes through her whole body, starting from the left hand, which creates the magic, up to her right hand ready to be hurled at the opponent.

KICK

This is one of the most difficult poses to draw, as the external kick requires a careful balancing of the body structure. The point of equilibrium is all on the left leg, turned inward. As the right-foot kick rises at face level, the torso shifts to keep the equilibrium. The line of force goes from the left foot to the pelvis and then to the right foot.

FLIGHT

The figure of this female superhero is suspended in the air, caught in the exact moment when she stops to prepare for her blasting magical attack.



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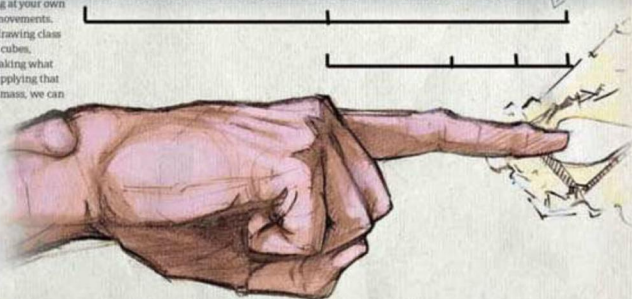
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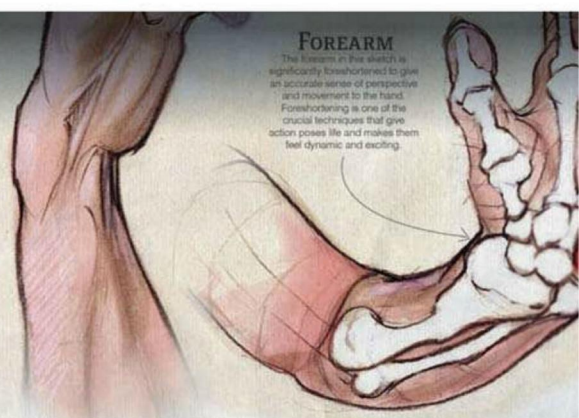
The hand does the most important work of the body. The key to overcoming this challenge is to understand the basic forms and shapes involved in the anatomy of the hand and how they relate to one another. There is a large amount of reference material available, but I suggest instead of taking the time to go out and find it, to start by just looking at your own hands and comparing them and their movements. Many of you might have taken a basic drawing class and remember the sessions of drawing cubes, cylinders and spheres in perspective. Taking what we know about geometric shapes and applying that knowledge to bones, joints and muscle mass, we can make a complicated thing like drawing the hand quick and easy.

Through the hands the artist can portray character temperament, emotion, power, movement – the list goes on. A magical character might use vocal and material elements for his craft, but very often they will use the hands. It is very important, therefore, for an artist wanting to create a believable magical character to have a good foundation in drawing hand forms.

CONSTRUCT THE CONCEPT
With practice, quite realistic free-flowing hands gathering and channeling magic can be put together easily for composition or conceptual work. I tried to loosen the hands and give the gesture some movement. This drawing is challenging because of the perspective of the hands. Through anatomy we can understand shape, volume and proportion, so gestures can become more convincing. With the anatomical foundation in place, we can build the character in any direction we choose.



There is a hand gesture that is a magical attack from one pointed finger. The proportions of the hand are very simple. The finger is half the length of the hand. The finger itself can also be divided up into half and then half again. Even though this is a side profile, the curve of the hand allows us to see the top of it.



FOREARM

The forearm in the sketch is significantly foreshortened to give an accurate sense of perspective and movement to the hand. Foreshortening is one of the crucial techniques that give action poses life and make them feel dynamic and exciting.



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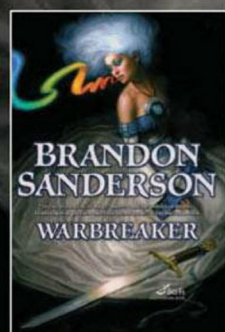
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The published book cover for *Warbreaker* written by Brandon Sanderson. Cover illustration by Dan Dos Santos

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Paint a fantasy cover illustration



Jaclyn Havlak, executive producer at The Art Department, reveals what's in store in this issue's five-hour video tutorial exploring the entire illustrative process, from brief to end result

Warbreaker

Real media, Photoshop, Painter

DAN DOS SANTOS

Artist info



www.dandosantos.com

Dan's work spans a variety of genres, including novels, comics and films. Clients include Disney, Universal Studios, The Boeing Company, Saatchi & Saatchi, Scholastic, Greenwich Workshop, Penguin Books and Tor Books.



So, you've made the important decision to become a professional illustrator, but what does that entail? The need for quality, effective illustration exists in just about any form of visual communication from movie posters, technical documents and websites to annual reports. For award-winning illustrator Dan Dos Santos, being a professional illustrator means a lucrative career illustrating for the likes of Disney, DC Comics and, in this case, fantasy book covers for Tor Books.

The video included with this issue of **Fantasy Artist** is an unprecedented five-hour-long tutorial from The Art Department (theartdepartment.org) and ConceptArt.org, and is ideal for any artist seeking a comprehensive look at the process of cover illustration from initial consideration of the project to delivery of the final image to the client.

For professional illustrators, working with art directors – the good, the bad and the impossible to

• Dan ensures the titanium white stays as such. By painting directly onto his reference image, he colour matches the shadows in the fabric of the dress to the colour mixed on his palette.



please alike – is a part of everyday life. Establishing and maintaining relationships with those you've had the best experiences with should be a long-term goal. Familiarity yields favourable working relationships when it comes to tackling a new project.

Unlike most tutorials that cover only the creative process, this video offers an invaluable insight into

the initial steps, with candid discussions from the perspectives of both the art director and the artist working on the same project. If you've ever taken a freelance job and wondered what the art director was thinking or what his or her motivation was for certain decisions along the way, this video sheds light on each step of the creative process from both perspectives.



• Dan carefully draws the entire picture in graphite, paying close attention to value, which he believes is the most important step.



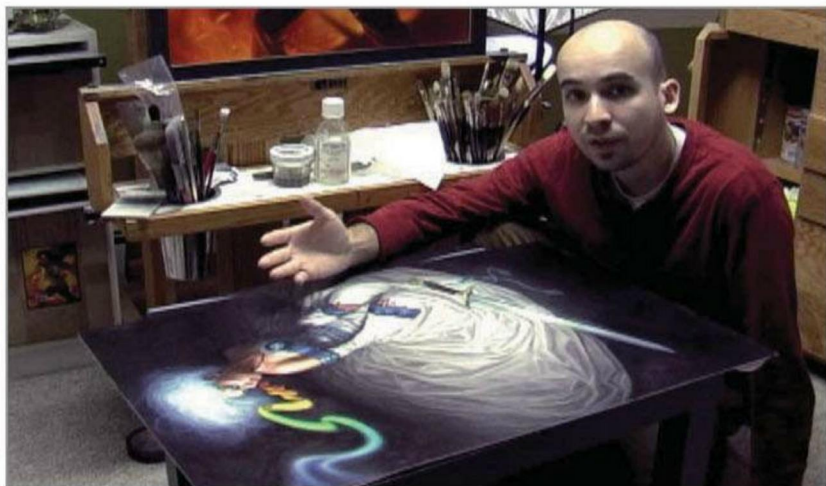
• He uses liquid acrylic paints in his underpainting, which he makes directly on top of the graphite drawing, enabling faster drying.



• During each step of his process, Dan is careful to protect the integrity of the essential focal point of the piece – the character's face. He spends as much time on this small, but essential, part of the painting as he does on all the other parts of the piece put together.



Dan has worked with Tor Books' art director Irene Gallo many times before. Gallo's intimate knowledge of his work and illustration style makes him the ideal candidate for this job, as she explains as the video begins. Then, once Gallo has offered the project to Dan, he explains all the important considerations he makes when deciding to accept or reject this – or any – job offer. After committing to illustrate the book cover, he then discloses all the various parts of the project, including payment, client expectations and the basic rights of freelance artists.



• Dan's many formal and informal discussions show us how he has enjoyed his success so far. Ostentatious and precise, we could all learn a lot from him about getting the job done, and done well.

• The final step in Dan's process includes taking a high-resolution photograph of the painting. This digital version can be used to make any minor changes the client requests very quickly, while also providing a valuable backup.



“ See every thought, consideration, decision and step involved in his creative process ”

For any creative professional, cultivating a consistently successful methodology takes time and experience, something Dan Dos Santos clearly has in abundance. Follow his meticulous process and gain, among other things, an appreciation for being extremely pedantic. Minimise mistakes and make better decisions during the initial planning phase of your own process by learning from an artist with tons of experience and many mistakes behind him already. On his website (www.dandossantos.com) Dan offers great advice to those looking to start a career in illustration: “Illustration is a business, treat it as such. That means learning to present yourself in a professional manner in order to establish good client relations. Always provide a quality product at a fair price and never miss a deadline.”

In this tutorial you will see every thought, consideration, decision and step involved in his creative process, along with the detailed reasoning behind each. Dan explores and discusses the fundamentals of colour, light and form, how they relate to one another and other essential elements such as mood and tone. These encompassing deliberations are accompanied by a scrupulous methodology, deeply founded in traditional art training, as demonstrated by Dan's employment of many universal techniques, like painting a bloody sword to convey the war theme of the story.

Learn how he creates optimal reference for the most dynamic composition possible by compiling the best parts of his multiple sources. Although Dan works mostly in oil paints, he also works digitally in some stages to perfect the piece. In fact, each part of this video contains information invaluable to traditional and digital artists alike.

The values, concepts and techniques demonstrated in this painting tutorial can be applied to just about any medium, for just about any scenario or project, personal or commercial. You are guaranteed to garner an abundance of knowledge by watching this video – so, clear a day on your schedule, brew a full pot of coffee and prepare to learn what it takes to turn a good artist into a great creative professional.

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